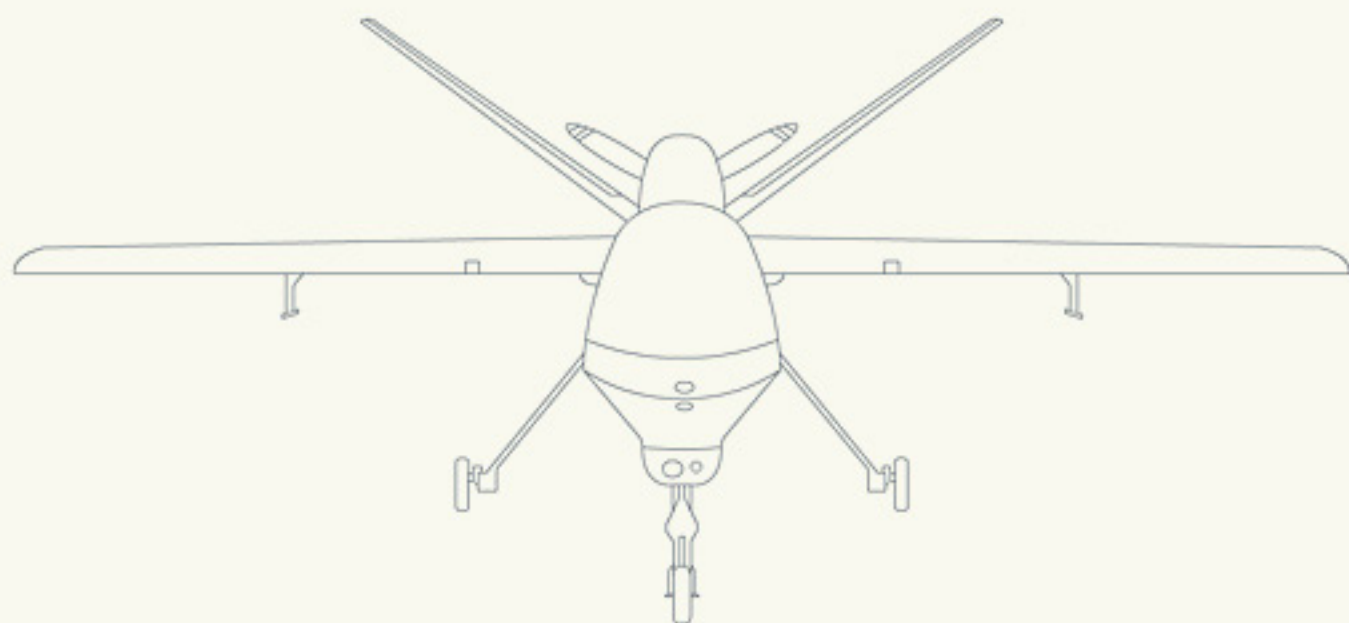


G A M E O F
DRONES

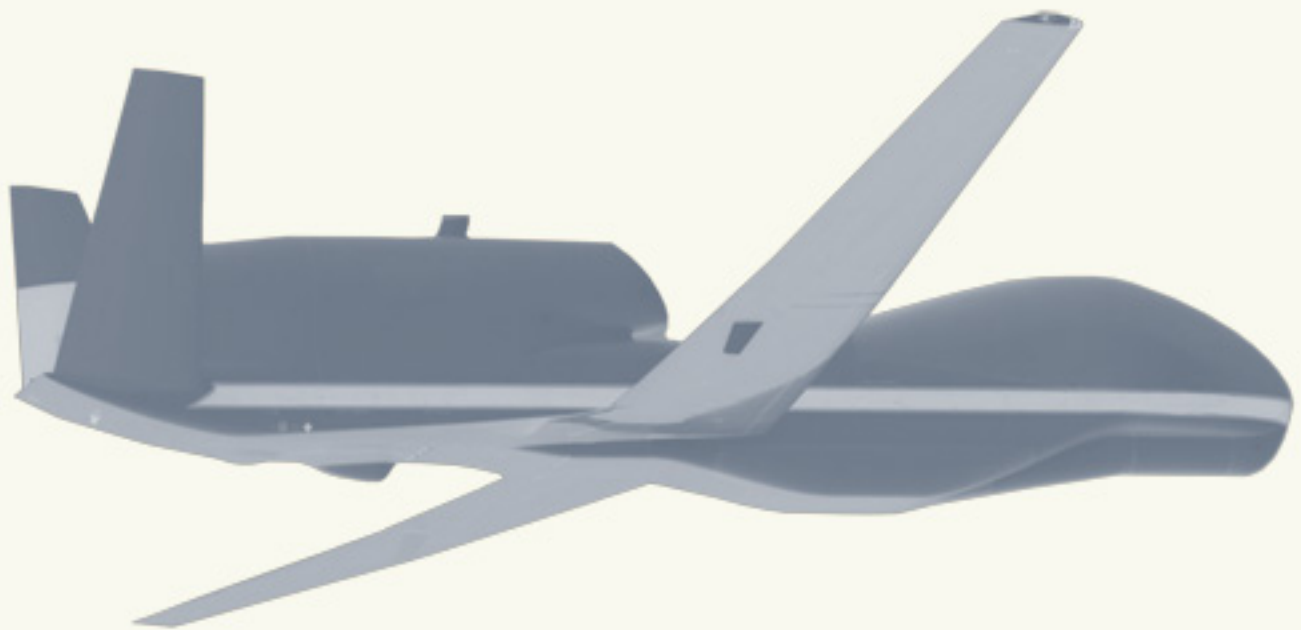


T H E N E W I N Q U I R Y 6



G A M E O F
DRONES

JULY, 2012



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THE NEW INQUIRY

magazine



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cover	0
interview	Border Patrol, 5 ALEX RIVERA and MALCOLM HARRIS
contents	Paranoid Androids, 21 by MARYAM MONALISA GHARAVI
	Nobody Knows You're a Drone, 40 by TREVOR TIMM & PARKER HIGGINS
	Flight for Your Rights, 49 by LEA ROSEN
	Vagina Analogues, 62 by MIKE THOMSEN
	Drone-Court Advantage, 72 by CHARLES DAVIS
	Missing Captain, 80 by CRISTOPHER SCHABERG
	Search for a Method, 88 by CHASE MADAR
	Louder Than Bombs, 100 by MADIHA TAHIR
	A Drone By Any Other Name, 111 by JACOB SILVERMAN
column	Unsolicited Advice for Living in the End Times, 127 by MICHAEL SEIDENBERG
back page	Praise for TNI, 132 by IFYOUCANREADTHISYOU'RE LYING





Border Control

MALCOLM HARRIS

interviewing

ALEX RIVERA

*For artist and director Alex Rivera, drones are the
medium and the message*

NEW INQUIRY SENIOR Editor Malcolm Harris talked with artist Alex Rivera. The writer-director of the 2008 sci-film *Sleep Dealer*, Rivera has been working with drones since the 1990s, when he piloted a small quad-copter called the Low Drone back and forth over the Mexican-American border.

Malcolm Harris: You've been a drone fanatic for so long, using them both as subject and medium, and it seems like the wider culture is finally catching up to you. As a very early adopter, why do you think drones have captured the public consciousness in the way they have?

Alex Rivera: The drone is the most visceral and intense expression of the transnational/telepresent world we inhabit. In almost every facet of our lives, from the products we use, to the food we consume, from the customer service representatives around the planet who work in the U.S. via the telephone, to the workers who leave their families and travel from all corners of the world to care for children in the U.S., in every aspect of our lives we live in a trans-geographic reality. The nonplace, the transnational vortex, is everywhere, ever present.

The military drone is a transnational and telepresent kill system, a disembodied destroyer of bodies. As such, the drone is the most powerful eruption and the most beguiling expression of the transnational vortex. The reason it has become a pop-cultural phenomenon and an object of fascination and study for people in many different sectors is that it is an incandescent reflection, the most extreme expression of who we are and what we've become generally.

MH: You make the comparison across a lot of your different work between drones and the issue of immigration, but also immigrants themselves. Whether in *Sleep Dealer* or with *Low Drone*, what about that specific comparison or metaphor attracts you?

AR: My fascination with drones emerged from a political satire project that I began in the 1990s. I wanted to explore the dissonance I saw occurring between the discourse around immigration — one of xenophobia and increased territoriality — and the discourse around digitality — one of borderlessness and increased free flows. In the '90s the Internet was in its infancy, but the rhetoric around it was expanding rapidly. Among a whole slew of new metaphors, I was attracted to the concept of telecommuting, because, in its evocation of the idea of working from home, it oddly resonated with the immigrant experience — the experience of leaving home to work, in a particularly acute sense.

At the same time that the borderless space of the Internet was being developed and celebrated, the government of the United States was building a wall for the first time to separate the U.S. and Mexico. And so there was this dream of connectivity, this dream of a global village, and simultaneously a material reality that borders on the ground were being militarized and fortified. Peering into that

contradiction, I came up with a nightmare/fantasy of an immigrant worker who stays put in Latin America and, via the Net, transmits their labor to a worker robot in the U.S. The pure labor crosses the border, but the worker stays out.

At first, the idea was meant as a critique of Internet utopianism and the politics of immigration. But over the years it has become a reality as call centers emerged in India, for example, and we began to see the first incidents of service-sector labor being transmitted around the globe. Transmitted transnational living labor was born, or what I like to call the first generation of telemigrants.

Separate from explorations of the subject of literal telepresence, I think, in all of my work, in one way or another, I've been looking at transnational networked subjects. The millions of undocumented workers who are physically present but whose political body is denied by a legal regime, occupy a place in my imagination very close to the call-center worker or the drone pilot. The military drone as a traveler headed from the global north to the global south is a kind of mirror image of these other histories that have brought human energy from the south to the north. The transnational space is circular, with flows in and out of the U.S., all of them disembodied and disfigured in complex and fascinating ways.

In my film *Sleep Dealer*, the main character is a worker in Mexico who beams his labor to the U.S. over the Net and works in construction, erecting a skyscraper in California. The secondary character is a drone pilot who is physically in the U.S. but who sends his energy to the global south in the form of a military drone, expressing his telepresence in the destruction of buildings. So there are buildings being built up in the U.S. by disembodied immigrant laborers and buildings being torn down in the south by disembodied soldiers. The film is a myth of sorts, simplifying and visualizing these oddly symmetrical global flows.

MH: So the drones act as a sort of accelerant — late capitalist cyborg merchant ships that speed up those flows?

AR: Yes, telepresent/transnational exchanges, including the military drone, accelerate and exaggerate already existing neocolonial exchanges. But the new systems don't replace the pre-existing ones — they exist in parallel and intermingle. And so an enduring neocolonial exchange, like a worker wandering north, through the desert, seeking work, losing their political rights in the process, encounters the 21st century telepresent present when they find themselves under the gaze of a Global Hawk drone, patrolling the skies over the U.S.-Mexico border, inevitably wandering through both American and

Mexican airspace. The body on the ground called “illegal,” tracked by a satellite-guided disembodied being, which itself is given legal authority to cross all borders.

MH: So with the automation of both service sector labor and military labor projected abroad, what do we risk being unable to see? I’m thinking of your Cybracero project specifically, the imagined workers you mentioned in *Sleep Dealer*, the imagined spectral cab drivers. What do we miss when we droneify these kind of service work relations?

AR: I don’t think we even have the vocabulary to talk about what we lose as contemporary virtualized capitalism produces these new disembodied labor relations. We don’t have a way to conceive of what those relationships are, what they could be, what we want them to be. The broad, hegemonic clarity is the knowledge that a capitalist enterprise has the right to seek out the cheapest wage and the right to configure itself globally to find it. I believe that there has been for the past maybe 40 years a continual march in which capital, confronting a labor movement that, with all its flaws, was somewhat successful in lifting wages and creating space for a middle class in this country, has been relocating the nodes of production outside of the legal space — the nation — in which the labor movement has been operating, organizing, and imagining itself.

Capital responds first with a mechanical move, moving factories outside the U.S., outside the reach of the national labor movement. And then after moving factories out, the next wave is to move information labor out, a digital move epitomized by the iconic call center but that now involves countless varieties of information labor. Amazon's Mechanical Turk is one powerful example. The remaining tranche is manual service labor — cooking, cleaning, construction, driving taxies, etc. Coincidentally, this last segment of labor that capital has not managed to morph into the transnational space by moving the jobs site into the global south is now largely preformed inside the U.S. by migrants who travel from the global south.

The next stage in this process, and I've been told by roboticists at M.I.T. that this prediction (which started as satire) is true and in progress, is for capital to configure itself to enable every single job to be put on the global market through the network and its increasingly sophisticated physical outputs.

In terms of resisting these transformations... If a taxi company has a way for someone in Jakarta to drive the taxies in New York, and it's going to reduce their costs tenfold, I don't even know the language to talk about what's lost for the passenger. And I don't know how we organize a rhetoric or critique against the idea of more telepresent labor, because

the power of the profit motive, of business ontology, is so extreme and universal that its march into every sector of our lives presents itself as a natural truth.

For what it's worth, the union that serves the subway operators here in New York City managed to defeat a city initiative to replace them with computers by invoking the spectre of security, arguing that a human worker can be helpful in a disaster in clear ways that a computer can't. Maybe that rhetoric could save the job of our hypothetical taxi driver from a remote operator.

MH: When you're dealing with a cab driver in Jakarta, it's not only that you don't have to talk to them; you don't have to talk to the cab driver where you live whose place they took. These small externalities that make up so much of interracial or interclass relations don't even occur.

AR: In discussing the menace of these types of imagined alienated labor, I don't want to romanticize the present state of affairs. Most of my taxi rides today are experienced with both the driver and myself on the phone, talking to telepresent individuals. Customers at a restaurant today often don't see the workers — and they're physically there, maybe 10 feet away — but nonetheless they can become phantoms or invisible presences. The threat that telepresent labor presents — that there'll be no contact between the person eating and preparing

food, that a certain social proximity or contact will be lost — has already happened! The erasing has already occurred.

Returning to the theme of the military drone, a lot of the first round of critique was that they make killing antiseptic or like a video game, or that it's hyper-alienating for the pilots. But what I tried to depict in my film and what I believe is happening is something not that simple. The drone has produced a third type of military sight. Drone vision is not like the infantry's vision that sees the opposing forces with their eyes, and it's not the sight system of the airforce pilots that never really saw what was below while dropping bombs from thousands of feet up, often at night. The drone pilot has a type of vision that no military actor has had before, that of lingering, of observing over extended periods of time, and doing so with absolutely no threat to oneself.

This gaze is unidirectional from the air down; it's safe, it's calm, it glides through time. You hear stories of these pilots watching a single house for literally days on end. And these cameras are so high-resolution they can see what's being cooked for dinner, and they can see if it's a boy or girl down below. The drone pilot is connected to reality in a way that is very different — not necessarily more or less, but different — than the infantry who's on

the ground with a platoon, whose life is on the line. Some of these virtualized transnational interactions can create new levels of connectivity, exchange, and vulnerability. I've been reading stories about drone pilots having versions of PTSD, seeking out chaplains and psychiatrists to deal with the emotional blowback of performing and witnessing these horrible acts so close and sticking around for the aftermath. This is a visual phenomena that no one in the infantry or air force has ever experienced.

MH: Drones, and the drone perspective, have been used a lot in big-budget action movies lately; that's one place we see it. I know the Pentagon has been involved in shaping the ways that happens. As a filmmaker what do you make of that?

AR: I got a phone call from a guy who was working with a Pentagon research group saying they were using my film in the group because they were interested in drone blowback, drone hijackings, nonstate actors deploying drones, and my film happens to have all that in it. This guy was working for the Pentagon doing this research but was also part of Jerry Bruckheimer's team. He was involved in connecting the Pentagon to Bruckheimer's films. The Pentagon typically doubles his budget, so if he has a \$100 million budget, they'll give him \$100 million in free military hardware.

MH: Seriously? Holy shit.

AR: *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* was the first Hollywood production with all four branches of the military: Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines all working on it. What can even be said about that? There's this extraordinarily complex exchange between the fantasies of war, the process of recruiting, the technologies of war that appear in the films, and the technologies of visualization that get invented by the military and passed down to the entertainment sphere. 3-D graphics get developed in the military, then get used to project films, but these are often action films focused on still other military fantasies, all of it, on screen and off-screen, in many ways written by the Pentagon.

As an independent filmmaker, as somebody engaged with science fiction, I wonder where there's space for hope in there. I think it's going to be hard for Hollywood to keep making movies with the spirit of *Pearl Harbor* or *Top Gun* if American soldiers are increasingly in air-conditioned bunkers in Nevada carrying out attacks on huts halfway around the world.

MH: With the Low Drone project, you're playing with the viewer's complicity with the piece. You have them agree to take responsibility for the pseudo-legal action of flying a drone over the border fence. Are you concerned with the ways drones isolate us from the consequences of policies they carry

out, or is that kind of a red herring and do drones actually force us to confront these questions that already exist?

AR: I'm a member of the Writers Guild, and I recently attended a panel called "To Drone or Not to Drone" hosted by the Guild. It was a gathering of writers in film and television who wanted to learn what's going on with drones so they can write more accurately about it. The speaker was P.W. Singer, author of *Wired for War*, and in the question-and-answer session, clearly the writers were troubled by drones and were trying to ask questions like "What do you think about drones being used to assassinate American citizens?" And what Singer had to say was "You're confusing the technology and the tactics. The technology is highly precise, and how it's used against American citizens is a tactical question." He said we could argue about the tactics but that he was there to talk about the technology. His argument collapsed the discussion. It was only after I left that I realized what a problematic argument it was. Saying "technology doesn't carry out extra-judicial assassinations, tactics do" is as rigorous as saying "guns don't kill people, people do." To Singer, these questions apparently exist in neat boxes: the drone over here, and the ways it's being used over there. But to me that's completely false.

Technologies constitute us, they change who we are, what we imagine we can do. That is one of the more troubling aspects of droneification specifically of the military, the way in which the disembodied soldier, the remote aerial drone, can make an invasion into a country not an invasion anymore because no soldiers are going. So we can have drone strikes in countries with whom we have no declared hostilities — not even the casual declarations of recent armed conflicts. It makes what in the old days would have been a risky cloak-and-dagger assassination plot — it's not like we haven't always done these things — extremely easy. It changes the cost-benefit analysis. The drone assassin reduces the cost barrier to the tactic. Intellectuals like Singer would have us believe the two don't determine each other, but it's not the case. The technology bends the curve of the possible.

MH: But that bending of capacity happens at both ends. When I think of a historical model for an antidrone movement, it would be the antinuke movement. But they didn't want their own antinuke submarines. Antidrone warfare activists and artists seem much more interested in how they can use those same technologies.

AR: When I talk to people recently I've been reflecting that the drone is the first disruptive military technology to permeate pop culture since

the nuclear bomb. We didn't have this kind of fascination with depleted uranium munitions or smart bombs or other military innovations over the past several decades. The drone has become a pop-cultural icon, constantly in the news and culture in ways we haven't experienced since the emergence of nuclear weapons. But like you're saying, in the '50s there wasn't a big DIY nukes community, not a lot of artists playing with bombs. But there were artists reckoning with the mushroom cloud as an image, lots of storytellers imagining different nuclear scenarios. Atomic language had all these cultural deployments. The drone moment that we live in is a time when all kinds of actors in society are playing with the technology, including people who are directly opposed to violent deployments of drones. So you see the Occupy movement's Occucopter, for example, or artists like myself building border-busting quad-copters.

The technology is much more within popular reach than nuclear technology ever was. Every technology is invented with an agenda, whether the automobile, the Internet, the television, what have you. These innovations are built with corporate or military agendas, and when they become accessible, they almost immediately become contested sites. You have urban youth morphing the automobile and artists and activists deploying television, the Internet, all these technologies being modified,

hacked, and dispatched in innovative ways. The drone seems like, for the first time, to be giving us access to a third dimension, in a sense. We spend our days with our feet on the ground, but the idea that we could build a sculpture that flies, or that you could conduct your own countersurveillance from the air, all seem like organic and predictable developments. Once we get a hold of a technology like drones, artists and activists will redefine and redeploy it. ■



Adapted from Magnus Carlsson's music video for Radiohead's Paranoid Android, 1997

Paranoid Androids

by

MARYAM MONALISA GHARAVI

Political theater is not without its tragic and comic masks

“People are a lot more comfortable with a Predator strike that kills many people than with a throat-slitting that kills one. [But] mechanized killing is still killing.”

— Vicki Divoll,
former CIA attorney

“Off with his head, man.”

— Radiohead,
“Paranoid Android”

BEFORE THEY WERE raining down from a great height as self-contained guillotines in aerial suspension, they had a noncombatant history. Archytus, the founder of mathematical mechanics, sent the Pigeon into the air in 350 B.C.E. The unmanned steam-powered object made a complete 200-meter flight, a self-propelled device channeling the programmer's ingenuity and seemingly making it the machine's own.

Characteristically, neither device pleased Archytus's close friend Plato, who grumbled that God was the only true geometer. Aristotle, a proponent of liberation robotics, recorded a reaction to Archytas's Pigeon: "The bird was apparently suspended from the end of a pivoted bar, and the whole apparatus revolved by means of a jet of steam or compressed air." The expository but approving review was fitting for a philosopher whose famed fourth-century B.C.E. dictum concerned the promise of animata as a way to free Greece from the labor of human slaves: "If every tool, when ordered, or even of its own accord, could do the work that befits it, then there would be no need either of apprentices for the master workers or of slaves for the lords."

Like Aristotle, the American poet Richard Brautigan imagined a sublime cybernetic ecology in his poem "All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace," written during a brief residency at Caltech in 1967. Brautigan's tone in the poem lends itself to several

interpretations — blissful submission to the idea of a plasmatic human-machine relationship, or a deeply satirical warning therein — but at least in experimental form the poem, like Archytus's curio, settles into the idea that mammalian and electronic life might be banded together in dulcet symmetry: "mutually / programming harmony / like pure water / touching clear sky."

What the lustrous metal bird of the machine future actually went on to deliver was a nausea-inducing scene of flesh hanging from the meadows of Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Palestine/Israel. The Taliban were harshly castigated for fastening lifeless bodies — often headless — to poles and trees in the Swat valley as reminders for their enemies. Journalist Jeremy Scahill recalled a witness video in which bodies hung from trees in southern Yemen following drone strikes. "One tribal leader told me, 'If you have a weak heart you would faint, because you couldn't tell if it was human meat or animal meat.'" The quote continues: "You see dead babies being pulled out of rubble and you see flesh on trees and on the ground and blood everywhere. What you don't see is evidence of an al-Qaeda training camp."

The pacified human-machine relationship envisaged by Aristotle and later situated in green-hilled ecoregions by Brautigan *was* a cooperative one, but toward what ends?

Two thousand years after Archytus, the aeronautics industry that has delivered the modern unmanned aerial vehicle has been completely erased of its lineage. In 1980, in his roomy Hacienda Heights garage, Abraham Karem, an engineer employed by the Israeli Air Force for nine years, invented the Albatross aircraft. The Albatross is the forerunner of the Predator, which launched Hellfire missiles that killed Anwar al-Awlaki and three others on September 30, 2011, and his son Abdulrahman al-Awlaki and nine others almost exactly a month later — significant events not only because the al-Awlaki father and son were U.S. citizens but because the kill was instrumental in catapulting the drone campaign into the public spotlight.

A successful engineer disappears beneath the exterior of his or her creation. Think of Heidegger's notion of tools disappearing in users' hands, or the transparent computer screens in *The Matrix* trilogy. At the highest levels of mechanized technology, the creator's intention has never been a trump; even dronemaker Karem admitted he "did not envision the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of warfare with nonstate adversaries." At a surveillance conference in London last year, I spoke with a drone researcher who had watched engineers test their devices in airfields. The contention that their scientific research would be used in stealth warfare to kill combatants or noncombatants visibly horrified them.

None of this absolves manufacturers, researchers, engineers, or any other host of nongovernmental actors from responsibility. On the contrary, their Frankenstein's monster quality is their most startling feature. Despite the relatively short span of time in their ascension, drones are the most anthropomorphized of killing machines.



So Does an Automobile (1939),
Betty Boop cartoon in which Betty works
in a garage filled with anthropomorphic cars.
Directed by Dave Fleischer

The drone traces its roots to the idle male honeybee in the animal world, sufficiently paranoid about its own survival to attack on command but also capable of patient loitering. It hangs out on the job as long as necessary. (The drone's hysterical buzzing sound is cause for massive psychological distress in Gaza, southern Yemen, and North and South Waziristan, where villagers refer to them in Pashto as wasps or mosquitoes.) It is a hybrid air and land machine, hovering with the light foot of an insect yet existentially camel-like, unhampered by issues of fatigue or refueling.

The most grotesque aesthetic feature of the drone is that it is eyeless. This turns its high degree of susceptibility for error into a sick joke about being blind, especially in the case of the latest fleet of kamikaze drones that *are* the missiles rather than mere carriers.

Drones are slow, not particularly advanced, and have limited defense mechanisms and stealth capabilities. They crash constantly. Drone Wars UK maintains a database to track crash incidents, but its creators say records are kept only of large drone crashes; small drones crash so frequently that "it would be nearly impossible to keep accurate records of them." In December 2011, a highly publicized and embarrassing drone crash of a web-winged Lockheed Martin RQ-170 Sentinel — the same aircraft used to monitor

the Bin Laden compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan — deep inside Iranian jurisdiction blew the lid off the American surveillance program there. Drones also incur viruses. When Creech Air Force Base's entire fleet of Predator and Reaper drones became infected in October 2011, *Wired* reported that the cockpit became a virus-carrying host, logging every keystroke as pilots commandeered their overseas missions.

The United States stands behind a one-way mirror playing the most terrifying sovereign role imaginable in a so-called globalized world, watching, calculating, and exacting who will die. Rather than reduce human error — a long-standing technocratic ideal that claims the right tools will free one from crashes, malfunctions, capture in enemy hands, and other folly — the drone campaign has found a strategic way to keep American pilots at a safe and comfortable distance and exonerate individual commanders from mistakes on the rare occasion that it admits to them. A blind-looking metal bird is a surefire alibi.

Then again, terrorization campaigns from the air are nothing new: The American military (along with the mercenary corporations at its disposal) has long enjoyed its position as a supreme arbiter of human life. Adopting a perverse model of managerial risk assessment, it has skillfully turned nonpersons into algorithms. In that light, the seamless transition into

drone wars — where the killer object is so deftly humanized — seems inevitable.

When a meme on a Tumblr called Texts From Hillary recently emerged, it got me thinking about the astonishing believability of human-machine interfaces in American statecraft. Hillary Clinton's persona as a swift, no-nonsense politician quipping text messages with a speedy machine-like delivery is utterly convincing: It is a quality for which she has been handsomely rewarded with adulation and fawning. (She is a champion of drone warfare, though her most pressing concern appears to be her legacy on the status of women in Afghanistan, their lives perpetually serving to mirror back on the reflective surface of others' career objectives.) Later a *détournement* called Texts From a Drone appeared, turning the efforts of the congratulatory paean to Hillary Clinton on its head. What should astonish us (I choose to be astonished by this) is that a drone is so easily endowed with human subjectivity. If Hillary is utterly convincing as a robot heart with a human appearance, then so is the android with its smiley-faced, acronym-filled expressions and puns ("How was Coachella?" "It was a blast!!1!").

Would the cutting satire of the meme work if it centered on an F-16 jetfighter or any other military-jockeyed aircraft? Safely assume not, because the perspective of the human inside the cockpit of those planes would adulterate the experience of a

personified (and paranoid) robot. Pure perspective would get lost. There's no Drunk Predator Jet, but there is a Drunk Predator Drone, whose tweets stream in with the mosquito sounds of an optimistic, indolent summer in the South.

How is it that drones, arguably more than any other extermination device, are also the most *persuasively* anthropomimetic? I think that answer lies in their most human feature: paranoia. The U.S. government views its insurgent enemies as depraved and mistrustful zealots, calling al-Qaeda “an insular, paranoid organization — innocent neighbors don't hitchhike rides in the back of trucks headed for the border with guns and bombs.” 2012 became the first year where the manufacture of unmanned drones outpaced manned aircrafts in the U.S. Air Force. Finally a device fashioned in the perceived likeness and behavioral hallmark of its enemy (in one of the most shadowy displays of sovereign execution ever) could make its mark.

“Even a paranoid can have enemies.”

— Henry Kissinger

“The first imperative of paranoia is There must be no bad surprises.”

— Eve Sedgwick

A summary of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You" would do neither the essay nor paranoid subjects justice, but that Sedgwick's noncommonsensical approach connects social marginality and paranoia with indices of historical change is one of its many notable achievements. Sedgwick, who identifies with a critical queer practice, explains how the paranoia transposed on the homosexual, especially prior to the 1980s, can illuminate "not how homosexuality works, but how homophobia and heterosexism work — in short, if one understands these oppressions to be systemic, how the world works."

Unvarnished knowledge about how the world works is more than beneficial: it is a survival mechanism. Paraphrasing Roland Barthes on the intelligence required to be a functioning paranoid, Sedgwick comments, "Paranoia requires that bad news be always already known." There must be no bad surprises. By becoming a methodology, paranoia has the potential to transform repressive forces (in this case, homophobic ideology).

What is worrisome, however, is that we also know the reverse to be true. The dominant powers are skilled at adopting the paranoid position, thus subverting the subversion Sedgwick let us in on. In the traditional zone of combat — my go-to stock

imagery for this is the trench warfare of World War I nearly every American child is exposed to in grade school — a paranoid soldier behaves vigilantly and overprotectively to prevent any bad surprises. Even in the era of smart bombs and aerial combat, a pilot or commander embodies the role of a highly attuned paranoiac. Why wouldn't drones?

If a drone's mission is anything other than killing, it is to spy and survey, conjuring Silvan Tomkins' description, in *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, of machinic selective scanning as a supplementary wing for the cognitive apparatus of the human brain: "Like any highly organized effort at detection, as little as possible is left to chance. The radar antennae are placed wherever it seems possible the enemy may attack. Intelligence officers may monitor even unlikely conversations if there is an outside chance something relevant may be detected or if there is a chance that two independent bits of information taken together may give indication of the enemy's intentions. But above all, there is a highly organized way of interpreting information so that what is possibly relevant can be quickly abstracted and magnified, and the rest discarded." Or in the lyrics to Panda Bear's track "Drone," "Now I see you again / Now I feel you again / Now I know you again."

Of course, Sedgwick does not need me or anyone else to point out how illicit power subverts the

already subverted and imbues it with even more nefarious purposes. Power maneuvers visibility into a political strategy, orchestrating the public spectacles of how Good Guys and Bad Guys appear. Take carceral punishment. When alleged criminals were humiliated in public, the visibility of the shaming was intended to serve as a chastisement of their act as well as a general social deterrence, for example, the return to chain gangs in the American South (“less that convicts be required to perform hard labor than that they be required to do so under the gaze of the public”), or popular American sentiment following the caning of Michael Fay in Singapore (“a growing feeling that well-publicized shaming stigma is just what the doctor ordered for recalcitrant youth”). Here Sedgwick’s exasperation on the matter becomes palpable:

It used to be opponents of capital punishment who argued that, if practiced at all, executions should be done in public so as to shame state and spectators by airing of previously hidden judicial violence. Today it is no longer opponents but death penalty cheerleaders, flushed with triumphal ambitions, who consider that the proper place for executions is on television. What price now the cultural critics’ hard-won skill at making visible, behind permissive appearances, the hidden traces of oppression and persecution?

It is widely accepted that not only do the powers that be deploy paranoid track-and-kill devices with virtual sovereignty, but the politic habitat in which they do so is shadowy and staged. Judicial — or

as the case may be, executive — violence retreats into the murkiest gloom or cleverly contorts into whatever explanatory acrobatics the president and his administration have hatched.

The epiphany about visible carceral punishment might be pushed further (I am not faulting Sedgwick for failing to do so; at the time of the book's publication the U.S. was only two years into the global "War on Terror" and the government's current legal defense, made up of people like Harold Koh, were then blasting George W. Bush as a "torturer-in-chief" who used sadism to extract confessions from suspects, rather than obliterate them on the spot like his successor). A recent Pew Research Center survey found that while U.S. drone attacks are hugely unpopular worldwide, 62 percent of Americans approve of them. This validates the formulation about visible and hidden punishment in the hands of people with "triumphal ambitions," leaving drones to occupy a peculiar place behind "permissive appearances."

Does it matter when state murder is off-scene? The nonvisibility of the al-Awlaki and company killings matter a great deal, but given that the targets were blasted into pieces on impact, what does that hiddenness do? It is important that the international public know that the killing by air has taken place, but that they were contingent on state secrecy, the

erasure of territorial sovereignty, and off-scenity is what attracts even more scrutiny to them. *The New York Times's* worst pejorative for the U.S.-born al-Awlaki and the fellow traveler killed with him, Samir Khan, was “propagandists.” President Barack Obama’s advisers told the paper they recall him saying, “This was an easy one,” in relation to the killing, though Al-Awlaki would have passed the test of constitutional free speech protections in the U.S. It is a staggering



Image: Department of Defense photograph
taken by U.S. Navy officer Shane T. McCoy
Source: Wikimedia Commons

admission that Obama would allow himself to be quoted that way to the paper of record.

Gone is the rich and highly disturbing imagery of detainees under President George W. Bush. The infamous circulated picture of detainees at Camp X-Ray was a Department of Defense photo-op (Sedgwick again: “behind permissive appearances”) that served important social functions in their written and unwritten captions. They reassure the world of their own humanity as captors (these men are about to be given a medical exam to assess their health), they enact the performance of public humiliation (the only way to tame these monster is by covering their eyes and muffling their ears), and they project a national image of unforgiving, powerful superbeings (let this deter you from thinking the U.S. will sit by idly as terrorists run amok).

However reprehensible the earlier years of the “War on Terror,” these pictures appeared intentionally and frequently, especially in the years following the live execution of Saddam Hussein. This visualization has vanished since at least the off-scene killing of Osama bin Laden. If nothing is shown, what is to stop one from assuming that everything is staged? In May 2012, the *New York Times* published a dramatic front-page long-form article confirming Obama’s leading role in weekly “Terror Tuesday” meetings, where the former law professor and his team of 100

advisers debate assassination targets using “baseball card” metrics. The visualization of the enemy was for their private eyes to see, and every photograph of the Situation Room was choreographed with the utmost attention to reflecting a commandeering presidential appearance. Empty Wheel’s Marcy Wheeler was among those who noticed this and her reading bears producing at length:

Here, the story is really about John Brennan, Obama’s Cheney, portrayed deep in thought and foregrounding Obama in the article’s picture. Indeed, halfway through, the story even gives biographical background on Brennan, the classic “son of Irish immigrants” story, along with Harold Koh’s dubious endorsement of Brennan’s “moral rectitude.”

But instead of telling the story of John Brennan, Obama’s Cheney, the story pitches Obama as the key decision-maker — a storyline Brennan has always been one of the most aggressive pitchmen for, including when he confirmed information on the Anwar al-Awlaki strike he shouldn’t have. In a sense, then, Brennan has done Cheney one better: seed a story of his own power, but sell it as a sign of the President’s steeliness.

The character sketches (and tasteful color photographs) of the President and his “Cheney” may prove politically expedient. While the revelation of the President’s intimate involvement with the list seems like the novelty — complete with a snapshot of his approving a kill from his mother-in-law’s house — the C.I.A.’s methodology has been on the record since at least 2009, when

an unnamed military source told *The New Yorker's* Jane Mayer, "There's a whole taxonomy of targets."

The motion to an elaborate, complex system does nothing to exonerate them. Rather it speaks to a contrived sophistication with killing systems that is supposed to impress its intended audience. Whether lethal strikes are personally chosen from a deck of cards in President Obama's hands or conducted by a computer algorithm before they are authorized, the sensibility of cruelty in playing a god or master has been completely displaced. In its place is the managed technophilia of the administration — the president has been admiringly referred to as the "Blackberry president," performed in a question-and-answer Twitter session with "the people," and took part in a virtual chat to talk about drone policy. No president has ever been more with it. There's something important about showing off this with-it-ness in the middle of the most shrouded and large-scale assassination racket in memory.

It is more plausible to call them UAV attacks than "wars"; it has not been confirmed that any U.S. adversary deploys military drones. (On the contrary, only Israel and the U.S. are principal manufacturers.) The machines are packaged as robotic and androidal, while the U.S. president and his administration render a gloss of moral

righteousness to their actions. Even Georgetown law professor David Luban, who endorsed American drones, admitted in the *Boston Review*: “Mr. Obama, according to participants in the many Situation Room meetings ... was acutely aware that with every attack he was pushing the United States into new territory.” Empire has never looked so photogenic. The question Americans should grapple with is not what the most technologically sophisticated drone being engineered is, but what kind of paranoid government is being manufactured along with it. ■



Nobody Knows You're a Drone

by

TREVOR TIMM *and*
PARKER HIGGINS

*For a citizenry subjected to technologically enhanced
surveillance, watching the watchers will prove a
veritable game of drones*

*“What a computer is to me is it’s the most remarkable
tool that we’ve ever come up with, and it’s the equivalent
of a bicycle for our minds.”*

— Steve Jobs

FORTY YEARS AGO, in a hundred garages throughout the Silicon Valley, across the country and around the world, hobbyists pushed forward the state of the

art of a technology developed by mega-contractors at great military expense. Steve Jobs's techno-Utopianism evinced in the quote above is both clear and typical of the era. A million geeks worked with visions of beating high-tech swords into ploughshares, creating tools that would make life better and bring the world together. More subversively, computers and networks would restructure society, for the first time ever, in a truly meritocratic way. Decades before anyone had heard the phrase, "on the Internet nobody knows you're a dog," the so-called hacker ethic, described in Steven Levy's *Hackers*, dictated that criteria like age, degrees, race, position, or gender were irrelevant.

Such a benevolent role for computers represented a dramatic shift from the way they had been perceived previously. Just a few years before Jobs began tinkering with them, computers were seen as cold, calculating, a symbol so "odious" that the leaders of the Free Speech Movement on the steps of the university across the Bay encouraged students to throw their "bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus." Students wore signs on their chest that co-opted the language of the punch cards so deeply intertwined with computers of the day: "Don't bend, fold, spindle, or mutilate."

Forty years later, we've seen a new wave of military technology take flight in the form of aerial vehicles — drones. Their rise has been anything but benevolent, turning into the military's most relied upon and most lethal weapon. But in small circles of technology enthusiasts, these machines have captured the imagination in a way that's reminiscent of the personal computer revolution, a fascination that doesn't stem from their role as a weapons delivery system. As terrifying as the implications of armed and unmanned patrols overhead may be, remote destruction isn't what holds the imagination.

Drones have not only destroyed thousands of lives, but delivered back real-time images of the destruction. As a domestic tool, drones aren't the next development of projectiles or even aircraft, they are the latest stage in surveillance gathering and analysis, outfitted with a vehicle and sometimes a weapon. Understanding drones in this way welcomes another separation between the oncoming drone revolution and that of personal computers: If the PC is a bicycle for our minds, as Jobs said, what are unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), when liberated from the military and operated by the general public? Instead of increasing our understanding, they extend our senses. They extend our vision, giving us "eyes in the sky," overhead or across the globe. Drones exist in a curiously intimate spot, that thin membrane between ourselves and the

world, expanding and filtering what we may take in. More even than “thinking” technologies, “seeing” technologies become a part of us.

Aerial surveillance is far from the first technology to change the way we see. Eyeglasses made our surroundings clearer, telescopes shortened distances, microscopes showed us life and movement where before there was none, and high-speed cameras separated motion into a series of static positions. There’s nothing inherently insidious about literally broadening our perspectives. And with hobbyist communities like DIYDrones playing the role of the Homebrew Computer Club, it’s hard not to be gripped with a combination of excitement and anxiety. On the individual level, the introduction of increasingly powerful systems with which we can see the world can be empowering. Widespread recording and communication technologies have given benefits unevenly, but have at least occasionally granted a voice to group members who may have otherwise been disenfranchised. Drones make the same promise: if brave activists like Manal al-Sharif, whose driving videos sparked protests by other women drivers in Saudi Arabia, can draw attention to inequality with the technology of today, what might women’s rights activists be able to communicate once a new powerful technology becomes a part of the way they see the world?

But whether drones end up being a net positive for liberty and equality depends on how we allow the technology to develop and advance. Institutionally, drones are already allowing for surveillance so unprecedented in its thoroughness that it seems all but certain to permanently entrench the power imbalances that exists today. Gender proves to be an important filter through which consider these issues, and a ready framework for looking at power gaps: will drones provide a perpetual and unavoidable “male gaze,” as Madeline Ashby and others have warned? Or will they deliver through technology the “post-gender world” Donna Haraway describes in her “Cyborg Manifesto”?

In order to weigh these two possible futures, it's important to first consider the scope of the surveillance at hand and the trajectory of technological development. And to get a feel for the ambition of the military programs, it suffices to review the plans they have for the straightforwardly named “Gorgon Stare.”

The Gorgon is a traditionally female sort of Greek mythical monster. Its names stems from the Greek word *gorgós*, meaning “terrible” or “dreadful,” and it is typically portrayed as having a variety of animal features, from wings to tusks, and most often snake-like qualities. In *The Iliad*, Gorgons are described as such: “and therein was set as a crown the Gorgon,

grim of aspect, glaring terribly, and about her were Terror and Rout.” Often, statues of Gorgons were placed on the top of buildings; builders believed their unnerving gaze would protect the buildings from intruders. It was that unflinching gaze that made her legendary: The most famous Gorgon, Medusa, was actually one of a very few who were considered mortal. She, of course, was known for turning anyone who locked eyes with her to stone.

For those concerned about the perpetuation of the male gaze through aerial surveillance, and given the widespread gender gap in the cybersecurity field, the choice of name is especially ironic. But the Army’s version is much scarier than Medusa and her less famous sisters. There is no avoiding eye contact with these drones. The flying machine holds dozens of cameras that can cover 40 square kilometers, leaving no area untouched. As the *Washington Post* describes, “It can send up to 65 different images to different users; by contrast, Air Force drones today shoot video from a single camera over a ‘soda straw’ area the size of a building or two.”

“Gorgon Stare will be looking at a whole city, so there will be no way for the adversary to know what we’re looking at,” bragged the Air Force’s assistant deputy chief of staff for intelligence. “We can see everything.” And not just *see* everything. To the extent that it’s about seeing, Gorgon Stare is an

intelligence program. But they are also *watching* everything. And when it's about watching, it's a way of establishing or reinforcing a power inequality.

To offset this sort of military power requires a radical decentralization and democratization of the technology. Where the popularity and capability of the personal computer increased as processor prices fell, the rise of personal drones will follow the drop of sensor prices that has already begun. Projects like the Occucopter, conceived by an Occupy protester to document police abuse, show promise as a means of putting drone power in the hands of nonstate people. These examples will only grow more common as open-source toolkits like the Droneserver project for online journalism comes to fruition and groups like the University of Nebraska's Drone Journalism Lab continue to explore the realm of possibilities.

The military may be spending tens of billions of dollars on their drone programs, but the Internet revolution has shown other factors can end up neutralizing that sort of imbalance; for better or for worse, in recent wide-eyed Congressional cybersecurity hearings, individuals with cheap laptops were described as a great threat to billion-dollar infrastructure.

University projects like the popular "swarming nano quadrotors" out of Pennsylvania, or hobby-level spy

projects like the F-BOMB give a hint of the future. Programs like Gorgon Stare may remain in the hands of state-level actors, but widespread technologically-enabled surveillance can undermine their impact and recalibrate power relationships. Moreover, broad individual technological empowerment can serve as a sort of progressive tax on the traditionally powerful, leveling off dynamics that would be otherwise perpetually skewed.

The impact of that strategy is moot, though, if the technology isn't used for individual and community empowerment. Other technologies have left promises unfulfilled. Strong encryption and decentralized communications channels may have allowed individuals to avoid surveillance, for example, but they failed to generate the same followings as less secure and more centralized channels.

It's a mistake, then, to approach the drone revolution with the same starry-eyed optimism or techno-Utopianism as the leaders of the PC revolution. There is no question that this new technology poses a real threat to our liberties, but we must accept that it will continue advancing. It's also a mistake to cynically assume that the situation will worsen. Drones will come to dominate the sky in the near future, that much we know. But whose drones they will be, and whether they're advancing the public interest, is still an unanswered question. ■



Flight for Your Rights

by

LEA ROSEN

*Privacy rights will receive the same treatment
given wedding parties when drones see
domestic deployment.*

ON FEBRUARY 14, the president signed into law the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, a whole section of which lays out the ways the national airspace will be opened up to drone flight over the next three years. Unmanned aircraft are coming to our national airspace.

A valentine to the military-industrial complex, the act commands the Federal Aviation Administration to work with industry, government, and the civil sector to get as many drones as possible into the sky as fast as possible. The FAA will develop new licensing standards and procedures for the operation

of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) in the national airspace, authorize test ranges for public safety agencies to practice operating their new tools, and eliminate existing restrictions on domestic UAS operation. By 2015, the government and the private sector will be flying drones through the skies above the U.S. (and elsewhere — one subsection of the act is dedicated to the expansion of unmanned aircraft use in the Arctic).

These orders come as part of a laundry list of deadlines and requirements that all serve to further something the FAA calls the NextGen initiative. NextGen, according to the FAA, is “an umbrella term for the ongoing transformation of the National Airspace System.” Currently, air traffic is controlled through a ground-based system. NextGen represents the “evolution” of air traffic control, and its goal is the replacement of the old ground-based system with a high-tech, satellite-based system of air-traffic management that will help prevent “gridlock in the sky.” NextGen “will allow more aircraft to safely fly closer together on more direct routes, reducing delays and providing unprecedented benefits for the environment and the economy through reductions in carbon emissions, fuel consumption and noise.”

Because UAS rely heavily on satellite GPS and automated sense-and-avoid capabilities to operate safely, their integration into the national airspace

system will lay the groundwork for the incorporation of those technologies into bigger commercial aircraft. The ultimate goal of NextGen is nothing less than the total computerization and automation of air traffic over the U.S.

The FAA met its first deadline handily when, in mid-May, it debuted a simplified authorization process for public safety agencies. Its next big deadline is August 12, by which date the FAA must have established six test ranges where unmanned aircraft will be integrated into small chunks of the national airspace for both civil and public operators. August 12 is also the deadline for the designation of permanent areas in the Arctic where small unmanned aircraft systems will operate 24 hours a day for “research and commercial purposes.”

An unspoken but obvious goal of this push for increased drone use is economic: around 70 percent of drone manufacturers are based in the U.S. According to a 2011 study by the global marketing research group Lucintel, total revenue from unmanned aircraft systems is expected to exceed \$7 billion over the next decade. Demand for the systems is increasing, both from developing countries and from the civil and commercial sectors. Once the national airspace is opened to civil operators, the drone industry’s customer base will be immense. Major aerospace and defense

companies like General Atomics and Raytheon are poised to sell unmanned aircraft for humanitarian relief and natural disaster applications, for use in collecting scientific research data, for storm tracking and monitoring crop conditions, and for advertising. (Think those EAT AT JOE's banners that fly past the beach, but without the prohibitive cost of hiring a human pilot.) The preeminence of the U.S. in the field means that advances in drone use will translate to an influx of capital here at home.

What's a Drone?

Most people use the word *drone* where Congress and the FAA use the less punchy *unmanned aircraft system*. As defined in the Modernization and Reform Act, an unmanned aircraft is any aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft. An unmanned aircraft *system* includes both the aircraft itself and all the associated elements that are "required for the pilot in command to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system." This definition encompasses every kind of remotely controlled flying object, from the kind you see on the evening news to the kind you buy for your sister's kid at a toy store. It officially designates anything lighter than 55 pounds as sUAS — the little *s* stands for *small*.) The FAA regulates them all.

For the purpose of this article, though, I am going to use the narrower definition proposed by Ryan Calo, director of privacy and robotics at Stanford Law School's Center for Internet and Society. Calo distinguishes drones from model airplanes and other remotely controlled aerial devices, specifying that drones as "unmanned aircraft that can fly autonomously — that is, without human control." An autonomous UAS may be programmed with a destination or task and will proceed to that destination, or perform that task, without the direct real-time input of a human pilot.

The narrower definition is better, because it is important for skeptics to parse precisely what about unmanned aerial vehicles unnerves us. Equating autonomous drones with everything up to and including toys like RC helicopters suggests either that the former is innocuous or that the latter is sinister; most critics of domestic drone use are not out to prohibit hobbyists from flying model airplanes. Failure to be precise only weakens the argument against pervasive use of drones (in Calo's sense of the term).

All remotely controlled aerial vehicles, from the robotic hummingbird at M.I.T. to the fully armed Predator, are included in the UAS category. Drone, in this article, refers only to those UAS that are capable of autonomous flight.

The State of Things

Currently, use of unmanned aircraft is restricted to three types of operator: recreational, public, and experimental. The civil and commercial operation of unmanned aircraft systems will remain prohibited until the FAA has successfully implemented its plan for the integration of civil UAS. Recreational use of model aircraft will not be affected by the Act, and testing by manufacturers for research and development will continue much as it has for years. Public entities will see big changes as a result of the law, which drops many of the current restrictions on UAS operation and encourages local governments to invest heavily in unmanned aircraft.

Recreational Use

The FAA has long regulated and protected the use of model aircraft. The new law contains a special exception for recreational operators flying models: they don't have to get any special licenses or dispensations, as long as they keep to the rules that already apply to them. Hobbyists may fly sUAS in the designated recreational airspace, capped at 400 feet above the ground. They may do so freely, provided they take certain precautions around airports and other high-traffic areas and

provided the operator keeps the aircraft in their line of natural sight.

These requirements are echoed in the FAA's May 14 announcement of new, simplified rules for public safety agencies; it enables such entities to easily obtain authorization to fly small vehicles weighing 25 pounds or less, provided the operator is on site and keeps the UAS in their field of vision. So police and fire departments can now *officially* use remote controlled model airplanes as part of their exercises.

Testing, Research and Development

The second category of available UAS license is the Special Airworthiness Certification — Experimental Category. The SAC-EC is a limited license available to UAS manufacturers. It allows them to fly their prototypes for research and development purposes. The certification only permits this narrow scope of operational use and is only granted to aerospace companies.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation filed a Freedom of Information Act suit against the FAA for a list of the entities currently issued experimental Special Airworthiness Certificates. The list, released by the EFF on April 19, is relatively short and includes all the familiar players in the military-

industrial complex: Raytheon, Honeywell, Telford, General Atomics.

Government UAS Operation

By far the largest players in the domestic UAS field are the governments of the U.S., from federal agencies to state and local administrations. These public entities have more access than any other type of operator to the national airspace system, although their available certification is both time- and location-limited. Public entities may obtain Certificates of Authorization to fly UAS for specific missions.

When North Dakota police revealed the role that UAS played in the arrest of Rodney Brossart, it showed public safety agencies — especially rural ones — the advantages of owning a UAS.

Brossart, an antigovernment “sovereignist,” had taken possession of a neighbor’s cattle after they wandered onto his property. When the police arrived, Brossart and two family members chased them away with high-powered rifles. After sixteen hours, and with a warrant, the Grand Forks police department asked DHS to help them locate Brossart — who they only knew was armed and somewhere on his 3,000 acre farm. DHS was able to pinpoint his location, and officers avoided the hazardous prospect of wandering

around a huge farm in search of an angry sovereignist with a shotgun.

The EFF also requested information on Certificates of Authorization in its FOIA suit and received a list of all the public entities that have applied for authorizations to fly UAS in the national airspace. The list reveals some unusual bedfellows: everyone knew that DARPA and the military have permission, but the list also includes local government entities like Otter Tail County, Minnesota, and a who's who of colleges and universities from Cornell to Eastern Gateway Community College in Ohio.

The FAA is pushing for more small public entities to invest in UAS. It is lowering the cost of entry into the national airspace, while the manufacturers of UAS lower the cost of purchasing small aircraft. They are widely touted as high-tech, low-cost solutions to a host of persistent problems, from lack of reliable traffic policing to assessing the risk of SWAT missions. (Their actual economic efficiency is not nearly so clear-cut; a May 30 government audit of the Customs and Border Patrol UAS program revealed it to be over \$25 million over budget, with insufficient qualified staff and equipment to meet even its stated goals.)

*The Future After the FAA Modernization and
Reform Act*

UAS can be flown recreationally; they can be employed by public entities, and they can be flown experimentally by the aerospace industry. But the elephant in the national airspace system is the inability for any private entity to use a UAS in commerce.

Unmanned aircraft serve as platforms for a wide range of technology. Most operators will use their aerial capabilities to deliver some other value — to collect hard-to-get data or carry a payload to an out of the way location. They are designed to carry equipment and are commonly equipped to conduct almost constant surveillance using video and infrared cameras, heat sensors, and radar. Some have super-high resolution cameras, facial recognition technology, and the capacity to intercept mobile-phone and Wi-Fi networks.

The industry and the FAA have been vocal about the many potential applications of UAS in the civil sector. UAS manufacturers point to the diverse ways public entities have already employed the technology. Although it originated as a means of supporting military and security operations, UAS technology is now used for border surveillance, law enforcement, scientific research, and environmental monitoring. In a 2010 UAS Fact Sheet, the FAA listed possible civil uses from farming to commercial

photography, and breathlessly declared that unmanned aircraft systems “may increase efficiency, save money, enhance safety, and even save lives.”

Obvious commercial applications include advertising, communications, and broadcasting. The FCC has proposed using UAS as emergency cell phone “towers,” flying them into disaster areas to provide mobile phone reception. These applications are in many ways the most unsettling, because they reveal the ease with which UAS operators might collect personal information. A cell-phone drone could just as easily intercept mobile communications as enable them. Advertising increasingly relies on personal data metrics to serve up information specially tailored to individuals’ interests. Is it beyond belief that the tracking and facial recognition capabilities of sUAS might be used to, say, send signals to electronic billboards as you walk past them so that they display messages relevant to your tastes? If sUAS become as cheap and common as Congress hopes, it might be no trouble at all to throw some drones into the air — each one capable of tracking up to 65 individuals — to gather data about their habits and provide them with personalized advertising.

Even UAS employed for less worrisome purposes pose a threat to privacy, since any UAS that flies around scraping up data indiscriminately could pick

up something incriminating about you. Would the government have access to the records of a local UAS operator? Would law enforcement need a warrant to go through such records — records that could include visual data they wouldn't otherwise be able to access?

It isn't the law that is struggling to catch up to drone technology; it's us. Like it or not, the NextGen computerized autonomous national airspace is coming. It's not a joke, and it's not science fiction. Coming to terms with that is important. Disbelief won't help at this point. The coming shift in our national airspace will push our boundaries. We'll be able to mount legal challenges against particularly egregious uses of the technology — it's unlikely that the sheriff of Montgomery County, Texas, will get much mileage out of his wet dream of a remote-controlled aircraft armed with tear gas and rubber bullets — but we won't be able to imagine every permutation this technology will take. This is going to be some *Minority Report*-level shit.

Amid all the unknown unknowns on domestic drones, one thing is for sure: The sky is about to get super weird. ■

Vagina Analogues

by

MIKE THOMSEN

*The revolution in female sexuality made
possible by vibrators finds its sinister
counterpart in the revolution in warfare
possible by unmanned aircraft*

WE HAVE ALWAYS been at war with our emotions. When we've been at our most uncertain, machines carried us through to safety. Hysteria is the commonest way to describe a loss of control over one's emotions, and its diagnosis has, not coincidentally, been applied to women far more commonly than men. Hippocrates imagined it as a malfunction of the womb, which he suspected to be a quasi-independent animal within a woman's body. When she became overworked or lacked proper "irrigation"

from male sperm, the uterus would wander into the crowded upper areas of the torso, causing erratic and troublesome symptoms, from muscle spasms and difficulty breathing to intensified sexual arousal and short-temperedness.

Masturbation was the prescribed treatment for hysteria in women, and because the patient could not be trusted to masturbate herself, doctors were ready with a helpful hand and a bill for services rendered. Yet physicians were frequently perplexed by their task, which could take more than an hour to induce the “paroxysm.” In 1660, Nathaniel Highmore lamented the difficulty of causing orgasm in his lady patients, which was “not unlike that game of boys in which they try to rub their stomachs with one hand and pat their heads with the other.”

In a speech to a joint session of Congress nine days after the hijackings and attacks of September 11, 2001, George W. Bush announced America’s military response would be a limitless war against an emotion. “Our war on terror starts with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there,” Bush said. He explained the motive of these exponents of terror, people who “kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With

every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends.”

The object of the war would be to quell our feelings by killing all the people who had an interest in using violence to cause emotional unease. A person became the enemy not when he killed, but when he considered the thought that other people could be made afraid by killing.

Fittingly, this has been a war effort where Americans have made increasing use of unpeopled drones to attack the enemy, to kill free from the fear of being killed in return.

In the 18th- and 19th-century, spas emerged as places women could go to have their hysterics treated by specially built machines, the most common of which shot out a stream of cold water at the clitoris. French doctor Henri Scoutetten described this method of treatment as painful at first but soon became “so agreeable a sensation that it is necessary to take precautions that [women] do not go beyond the prescribed time, which is usually four or five minutes.”

One of the first electric vibrators appeared in the 1880s. Designed by a British doctor and powered by an internal battery, the cylindrical machine was

made to vibrate with an oscillating motor and came with several attachments to adjust for size preferences. Variations on this basic design flourished, and by the early 1900s vibrators were advertised as household appliances in a wide range of women's magazines, from *McClure's* to *Modern Women*. The Sears, Roebuck & Co. sold them in their catalog as "Aids That Every Woman Appreciates."

The first drone strike in the War on Terror was in over a century later, in February 2002. The victims were three men who'd been gathering scrap metal in the hillside to sell off at market. CIA surveillance had footage had determined one man, Zhawar Kili was being treated with "reverence" by the other two. He was also tall, like Osama bin Laden. After killing these three men, a Pentagon spokesperson admitted the government did not know who the dead men were, but that there were "no initial indications that these were innocent locals."

Killing is only moral as a response to a deadly threat. You should only respond with force equivalent to the amount of force you are being threatened with. In individual encounters, this concept is straightforward: if someone aims a gun at you, you can be reasonably assured they intend to shoot it at you. In a war against

the feeling of terror, deadly force is rationalized not because of a direct threat but a predicted one the target will make at a later time. Drones become the ideal weapon because they offer the chance to kill without facing the reciprocal attack, their existence is itself a kind of victory, nullifying the feeling and making war a procedural formality.

Similarly, the spread of the vibrator was largely to the benefit of the male diagnosticians who were relegating their sexual and emotional engagement with women to a similar kind of procedural formality. “When marital sex was unsatisfying and masturbation discouraged or forbidden,” Rachel Maines wrote in *The Technology of Orgasm*, “female sexuality, I suggest, asserted itself through one of the few acceptable outlets: the symptoms of the hysteroneurasthenic disorders.”

This “androcentric” view of sex through the ages defined the act by “three essential steps: preparation for penetration (‘foreplay’), penetration, and male orgasm. Sexual activity that does not involve at least the last two has not been popularly or medically (and for that matter, legally) regarded as ‘the real thing.’ ”

Men’s sexuality could be seen as essentially productive: every ejaculation was, at least in theory, creating the potential for procreation. That it happened to also feel good was incidental. Because there was no obvious effect on fertility from a woman’s orgasm, the desire to experience it could be taken as a superfluity,

the by-product of an unhealthy mind dangerously fixated on a hopeless apparition.

Women's conviction of their own orgasms was tolerated as a philosophic matter, but as soon as their intellectual interest translated into physical demands, they became abnormal, unwell, and in need of treatment. As soon as it was possible to delegate the task of inducing orgasm to machines, it was seized upon by sore-armed doctors everywhere, a blessed reprieve from the indignity of having to interact with the mammalian undercarriage of the fairer sex. One would hate to imagine having such an encounter without the mediation of a machine.

In the 10 years since Kili was killed, drone attacks have likely killed more civilians than targets, and in many cases the CIA has retained the right to define enemies post facto. The accountability is never on the drone pilot firing on a wedding procession or a crowded civilian neighborhood but always on the victims, who must explain their presence in an area that had been designated as a target. Presence in a war zone is, according to the logic of the drone attack, an implicit admission of guilt.

Ironically, the creation of machines to spare men from having to encounter a woman's orgasmic

needs would lead to the dissolution of the androcentric view of sexuality, making it as unfathomably bizarre as the 14th century idea of a flat earth. The advent of the armed drone carries with it the same seed, inevitably bound to destroy the philosophic foundation of war, and the privilege of defining the enemy that comes with it. The greater the ability to wage war without putting soldiers in harm's way, the more absurd war becomes: an expression of inflexibility and sanctimony, fearfully condemning the unknown based on strangely inhuman interpretations. Everything looks like a threat from above, every body a terrorist, someone who hates us for being who we are.

Like vibrators, drones will inevitably proliferate far beyond the clinical confines of their original use. The devices of warmaking have already bled into amusement culture, subverting the seriousness of the act by turning its implements into playthings, from the use of radar screen to make the worlds first videogames in the '50s to reappropriation of wireless radio communication in toy walkie talkies. Drones offer a unique example of a destructive technology that has already been transformed from a weapon to toy, and now back to weapon again.

While the drones that fly in Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, and elsewhere remain an order of magnitude more sophisticated than the remote con-

trolled airplanes of suburban childhood, time will erode the distance. Last year, a Massachusetts man unconnected to any explicit terrorist cause was arrested on the suspicion of having planned to load his F-86 Sabre remote controlled airplane with C4 and fly it into the Pentagon.

Over time vibrators became the social equivalent of a handkerchief, an over-elaborate and ornamental item whose basic purpose was, if not embarrassing, at least not worth bringing up in polite company. When Freud and the school of psychoanalytics began re-imagining the psychosexual landscape of hysteria, the commonplace diagnosis began to seem like an artifact of how thoroughly wrong men had been in understanding women's health and sexuality. The assumption that women who behaved erratically were victims of their meandering uteruses was brought up less and less, and the parochial diagnosis disappeared. But the sound remained of millions of electric motors droning away behind closed bedroom doors.

When the skies are filled with drones — as they are already becoming, from border surveillance planes to those monitoring various sea life groups in Alaska — we will be confronted again with the

foreboding question that revives the old terror: Whose drone is that above me, and what does it intend to do? The machines intended to quell terror will instead propagate a permanent sense of uncertainty in the places we'd most intended to protect. A walk through a parking lot or a quiet lunch hour spent in the park have a new background noise, a buzzing motor that could be a toy or an implement of death. If we are to have a sense of security in times like these, it will have to be self-administered. We can never seem to have it from one another. ■

Art Barnes
Philip Williams
Edward O'Sullivan Lee
Joyce Robinson & Neal Samms
Henry Simpson
Arthur Gahaney
Edward O'Sullivan Lee
Joy Bradley
Jeffrey Reed
Jim Clark
Kathleen O'Reilly Livingston
Bernard Green
Dorothy Winston Rodney
Dagmar Duncan
Dawn Rulley
Henry Tynan or Tanya
Wayne Clarke
Arthur Kelly
Marie Anderson
Karene Campbell
Bryan Reed
Earl Bryan
Earl Bryan
Jeffrey Bailey
J. Hamilton
Carlton Lloyd Barrett
Carlton Manning
Kim Janki
Stephen Court
Debbie Macdonald
Agnes Livingston
Kerley Fords
Kim Taylor
Richard Bennett
Anthony Ellis
Robert Johnson
Alan O'Reilly Thomas
Julius Chen
Paul Smith
Daniel McGuire
Dora Wilson
Paul Hudson
Jennifer Parsons
Renee Shaw
David Palmer
Davidson Brown
Robert Brownlee
Kerley Chen
David Johnson
Lauri Eversen Brown
Lauri Scott
Joyce Anderson
Dore Hilson
Peter Hugh Henry
Regina Johnson
Jack Nuber
Charles Smith
Dean Edwards
Kerley Archibald
Dagmar Harris
Julia West
Wendy Cooper
David Williams
Lucas "Nolan" Miller
Margaret Gordon
Art Director & Norma Foster
Art Yank
Anthony Graham
Arthur Alphouse Phillips
Daphne Clark
Philip Thomas
Robert Muir
Jennifer Wright, Maryanne Harrison and Helen Wilson
Diana Markandous
Linda Bryan
Richard Smith
Everett Dwyer
Michael Johnson
Evan Kaski
John Stevens
Wendy Tucker
Dennis McCabe
Robert Livingston Thompson
Kerley Christie
Hilary Brown
Doris Thomas
Arthur Graham
Dawn Pickering
Kathleen Barrett
Angie Tynell
Daphne Schwartz
Dennis Brown
David Bull
Dennis Foster
Angie Delwood
Dennis Wilson & Glen Smith
John Winchester Williams
Dennis Edwards
Dennis Smith
Dennis Emmanuel Brown
Dennis Higgins
Dennis Tinsdale
Dennis Vassell
Dennis Dennis & Jennifer Jones
Dennis Morgan & Milward Todd
Dennis Young
Dennis Adolphus Davies
Arthur Bennett
Dennis A. Taylor
Kerley Parsons
Kerley Pearson
Matthew Sandra Matthews
Kerley Reed
Norman Suggs
Art Saunders
Kath F. Audbrook
J. Clark
John Bullock
Patrick Thompson
Richard Hall
Johnny Moore
Arthur Wright
David Offin
Henry Richards
Dennis Kerry
Evan Spencer
Don Drummond
Art Gordon
Jason Williams



Drone-Court Advantage

by

CHARLES DAVIS

*Progressives need to “D” up
for the Big O’s second-term bid —
if they know what’s good for them*

WITH ALL THE attacks on his leadership from the professional left, it’s all too easy to forget that Barack Obama is by far the most liberal president in American history. From permitting gays to serve openly in the military to saying they should even be allowed to get married, the president has deftly tied his most progressive policies to America’s most reactionary institutions, upholding the long liberal tradition of making the status quo more sustainable, its excesses more subtle. But to the outraged left, helping Americans isn’t enough. He’s supposed to concern himself with the lives of foreigners, too.

*“I prioritize my vagina over
drones.” — Imani Gandy,
Raw Story blogger Angry
Black Lady*

As progressive pundit Joy Reid wryly observes, the effeminate anti-Obama purists are at such pains to attack this president that they're forced to spend more time condemning what goes on outside America than the reforms he's talked about instituting within it. Indeed, Reid notes they're the sort that, at a loss to explain record corporate profits — bye bye, Bush recession — turn to arguing “the government's use of drones and waging of covert wars and the drug war are the most pressing problems facing the planet.”

*“We've been able to prosper
in these difficult times by
innovating,” says
Wells Fargo CFO
Timothy Sloan.*

If you can stomach the toxicity, just consider the implicit Birtherism: that President Obama should be more concerned about non-Americans than registered American voters, as if he's not even American himself. And consider the classism and misogyny. Amid a GOP-led war on women, the privileged far left would have us believe protecting the life of some impoverished stay-at-home Buzkashi mom is as vital as safeguarding a successful, independent American woman's access to subsidized birth control — that a Madeleine Albright or Hillary Rodham Clinton are no more important than some willfully oppressed third-worlder in a burka.

Tritely declaring President Obama no different from George W. Bush, these nominally left-wing suppressors of the vote even adopt the same bigoted,

*Lesley Stahl on the U.S.
embargo against Iraq:
“We have heard that a
half million children have
died. I mean, that's more
children than died in
Hiroshima. And, you know,
is the price worth it?”*

*Secretary of State
Madeleine Albright: “I
think this is a very hard
choice, but the price — we
think the price is worth it.”
— 60 Minutes (1996)*

“pro-life” language one would expect to find outside an abortion clinic in Kansas, proclaiming our commander-in-chief a “criminal” and “baby killer” all because he has killed a few regrettable babies as part of wars that much of the world considers criminal — a privilege, mind you, never denied any of his white predecessors. They even attack the president because he has had the temerity to protect the lives of American servicemen and women through the record-breaking use of drones, ensuring the greatest threat they face is carpal tunnel, not a bullet from an angry savage.

Don’t let the baby-killing rhetoric from the emo-left fool you, though: drones don’t just protect important people, they protect Pakistanis and Yemenis too. Indeed, we know that because that’s what those who use them say. Repeatedly, the boss of country’s advisors have assured us that civilian deaths in his drone wars are “exceedingly rare” and that, even when they do take life, it’s only to protect it. Not even Glenn Greenwald — basically just a whiter, more privileged Anwar al-Awlaki — disputes these facts.”

“More than 600 civilians are likely to have died from the [drone] attacks,” wrote Brookings Institution senior fellow Daniel Byman in 2009. “That number suggests that for every militant killed, 10 or so civilians also died.”

Yet the left, from Noam Chomsky to the Brookings Institution, persists in talking about civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Pakistan and wherever that have already been officially denied. That raises the question: for what electoral purpose? Talking about

innocent men, women, and children killed by our way of life isn't going to bring them back, but it will undermine support among President Obama's left-wing base. Indeed, while some pacifists confuse their personal beliefs with politically viable policy solutions — thinking, as blogger Adam Serwer puts it, that America should stick to “using banana creme pies or wifflebats in its defense” — President Obama is compelled to live in the real world. And there he must confront real threats, like a potential GOP takeover of the Senate, that require an active and politically unassailable foreign policy. Instead of dwelling on dead foreigners and arguing and bickering over which president killed which child, the left would do well to remember the huge advances in progressive rhetoric we've made these last four years. Instead of bashing the man who saved us from Sarah Palin, we ought to rededicating ourselves to addressing the most pressing problem the planet faces right now: defeating Mitt Romney.

After all, if you don't like that Barack Obama possesses the unilateral ability to decide who lives or dies, imagine how insufferable that power would be in the hands of the former Massachusetts governor. Instead of laughing with the president as he jokes about drone striking the Jonas Brothers, we would probably be stuck listening to an awkward Romney make dated quips about offing the Allman Brothers.

“When Romney wins and he reduces this kind of stuff, from my mouth to God's ear, he reduces this kind of stuff, I can't wait to hear what these clowns over at MSNBC [say].”

— Glenn Beck

“Jonas brothers are here, they're out there somewhere. Sasha and Malia are huge fans, but boys, don't get any ideas. Two words for you: Predator drones. You will never see it coming. You think I'm joking?”
— Obama at the WHCA, 2010

Rejecting the Gnostic, all-war-is-evil left, liberals also need to push back hard against those who would neglect the nuanced differences between a radical right Republican killing innocent men, women and children as part of a unilateral war for oil, and a center left administration doing the same under the auspices of a limited defensive action or long-term military occupation condoned by the Western European world community. And we need to recognize that in many ways anti-imperialism is just another form of cultural imperialism, insisting as it does that each and every nation of people must abide by the same strict moral or international legal code. If we're accepting of cultures that hunt whales, there's no reason we should turn around and condemn our own just because it prefers to hunt Muslims.

We liberals also ought to quit patronizing the innocent victims of our wars by portraying them as innocent victims of our wars. As I learned on a recent trip to Pakistan, often times these "victims" — or rather, their survivors — will tell you they don't feel victimized at all: they feel empowered. Indeed, many say they're just happy to be taking part as some of the first proud people of color to be warred upon by a proud American emperor of color.

"My family, they were not terrorist," one man who lost his wife and three sons in a drone strike told me in an interview. "But," he added, wiping tears of

"[I]n reality Pakistanis are deeply torn about the drones. For every anti-American rant . . . there is also a recognition that these strikes from the sky have their purpose." — Pir Zubair Shah, Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University

what were presumably joy from his face, “now they are history.” The man, whose name I have forgotten, was probably called Mohammad.

We should be extremely wary of claims to innocence by any “victim” of the Obama administration. We know Republicans will stop at nothing to undermine his presidency, when confronted with hundreds of children burned to death by Hellfire missiles under his watch, one must ask, Who does it benefit? If their charred remains will be used to undermine the left’s enthusiasm for the president, depressing voter turnout — a classic tactic of Karl Rove — can they really be said to be innocent at all?

UNICEF, the United Nations children’s agency, said in response to the findings: “Even one child death from drone missiles or suicide bombings is one child death too many.”

During my time in Waziristan, I found the people of Pakistan understood this better than most self-styled progressives. For instance, I met a young couple whose 9-year-old daughter, their pride and joy, had her life cut short because she made the mistake of hanging around men between the ages of 10 and 85. But her father — let’s call him Mohammad II — recounted to me that the real tragedy of his daughter’s death would be if it undermined President Obama’s political capital, and with it his ability to expand Americans’ access to quality, affordable health care.

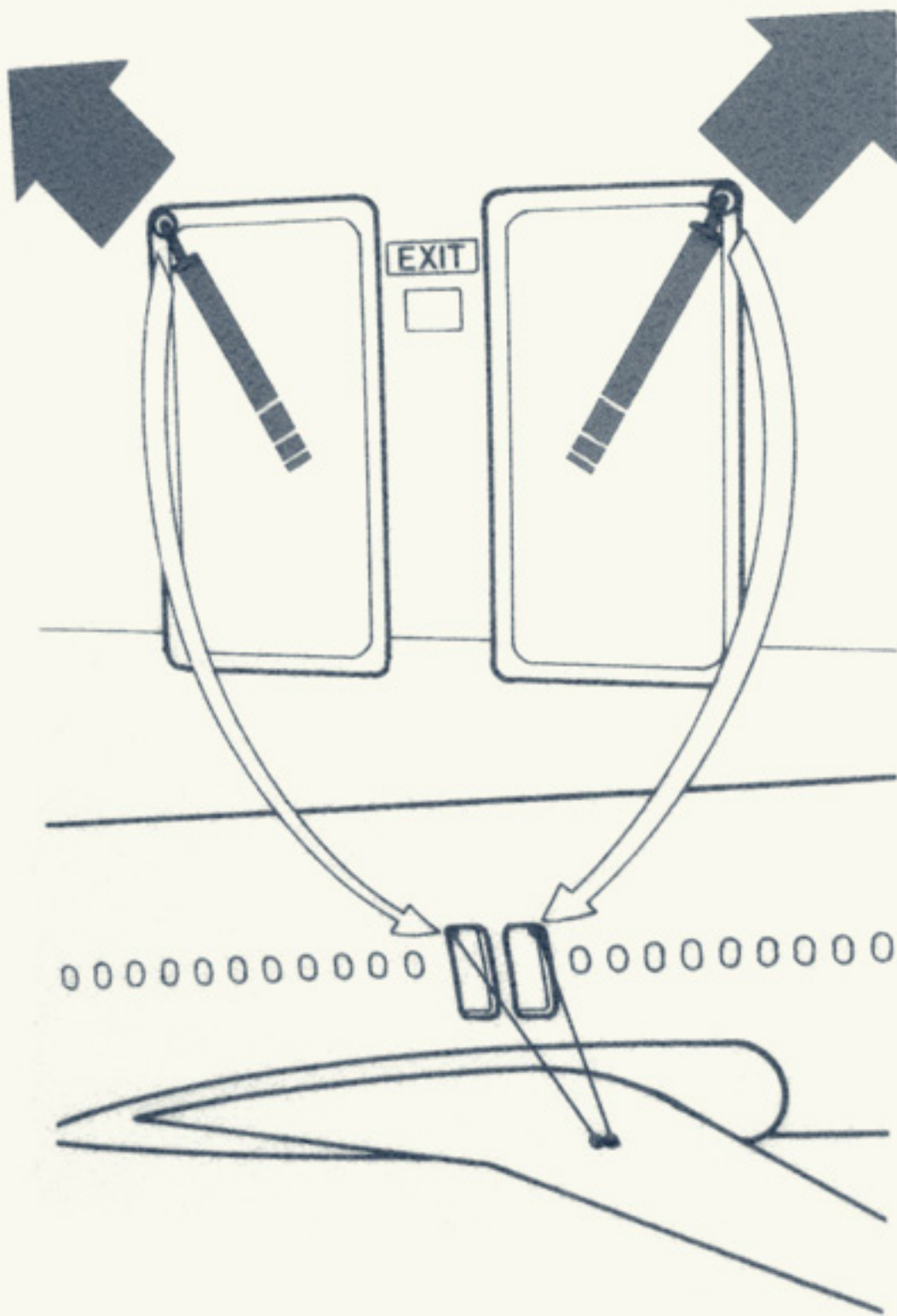
“My daughter was a precocious child,” he explained to me. Insisting I refer to her as “Lilly Ledbetter,” her father recounted how she cried as much the day

Obama was inaugurated as the day he had her killed. At the tender age of 7, she even had a blistering letter to the editor concerning the solvency of the Social Security trust fund published in *The Washington Post*, leading to a regular guest-blogging gig for *Mother Jones's* Kevin Drum. Far from bitter, he said she would have accepted her own death as the unfortunate result of GOP intransigence, knowing the man who brought mandated health insurance to the masses had no choice but to dramatically escalate the drone war in her country lest Republicans argue he had not dramatically escalated the drone war in her country.

"I told my pastor when I die, I want him to be able to say at my funeral that I made a difference." Lilly Ledbetter, Agence France Presse, June 7, 2007

Lilly's father then told a story that has stuck with me ever since. As she lay dying in a pool of her own blood and vomit, the overpoweringly putrid scent of death wafting in the air as her father cupped the intestines spilling out her mangled abdomen, the littlest Ledbetter faintly breathed her final words. And like the laudable columnist Ezra Klein, she was on message.

"It's so cruel," she said, whimpering as tears fell from her bloodshot eyes to her blood-smeared cheek, "what Mitt Romney did to that dog." ■



Missing Captain

by

CHRISTOPHER SCHABERG

*Against the strident tones of unmanned-flight
boosterism, the reservations of naysayers becomes
just so much noise*

*It was a beautiful thing to see, aircraft climbing, wheels
up, wings pivoting back, the light, the streaked sky, three
of four of us, not a word spoken.*

We might be tempted to read this passage, taken from Don DeLillo's short story "Hammer and Sickle" as a testament to the sublimity of human aviation. In fact, this scene is conjured from the perspective of maximum-security prisoners who

are on work detail, cleaning up the tarmac of an Air Force base while jet fighters thunder indifferently around them. Like so many of DeLillo's descriptions of air travel, the ostensibly simple beauty of human flight just barely conceals a hideous underbelly.

Now we can imagine a similar scene wherein the aircraft themselves are "unmanned" or piloted by remote control. They might be drones. Unmanned aerial vehicles represent an increasingly contested nexus for public and secret discussions about airspace, privacy, police jurisdiction, and remote military targets. And they're bleeding into everyday life.

In a recent *New Yorker* article on the private company AeroVironment, Nick Paumgarten surveys the many current experiments, speculative uses, and visionary futures of drones — from the deployment of a Predator drone to assist in a SWAT invasion of a ranch in North Dakota to a "Tacocopter" that "theoretically delivers tacos to your door" to the small-scale "Hummingbird," crafted with enough verisimilitude so as to confuse actual *trochilidae*. In the same issue of the *New Yorker*, a Talk of the Town piece centers on the duo who created the Occupy Wall Street drone, "a kind of four-pronged Frisbee that glides over Lower Manhattan, armed with a video camera, to keep tabs on the police."

Far from being solely the domain of covert government operatives and paramilitary independent

contractors, we find ourselves in an era of ubiquitous droning. The U.S. military was reported to have “some 7,000 aerial drones” as of mid-2011. But then, simply perform a search for “drone” on Amazon and behold the more than 7,000 results, starting with a smattering of giddily advertised toy spy devices; or consider the May 27, 2012, cartoon strip in the *New York Times* by Brian McFadden, “The Many Uses of Police Drones.” Drones are everywhere — literally (at least potentially), as well as throughout our cultural imagination.

Indeed, at one point in Paumgarten’s *New Yorker* article, he notes, “It will soon be technically feasible, if culturally unimaginable, to deploy passenger and cargo planes with empty cockpits.” Drones could transport us in the near future.

Yet a 2011 *Fast Company* article on concept aircraft designs, quite counter to its promising title — “NASA Reveals the Weird and Wonderful Commercial Airliners of 2025” — seems to reveal only that future jetliners will look basically like today’s aircraft. And the possibility of remote piloting is not mentioned once in this article as an option or prospect.

The current state of air travel has two sides. On the one hand, aircraft are being miniaturized and controlled remotely, reducing human error in-flight and opening up innumerable possibilities for

These comical (yet in many cases already existing) “many uses” include backyard inspections, traffic enforcement, pedestrian enforcement, fashion policing, disenfranchising voters, stifling dissent, and Fourth Amendment circumvention.

military operations as well as ordinary people on the ground. At the same time, flight seems determined to reproduce itself more or less as it is, promising ever more hours of tedium and waiting between (and inside) large rooms cruising through space.

These two sides twist and become one where new media technologies enter the scene. Whether manipulating a Parrot AR.Drone Quadricopter (marketed as “Controlled by iPod touch, iPhone, iPad, and Android Devices”), checking in for a routine flight on one’s mobile phone, or dealing with labyrinthine realities of airport life (as one *New York Times* article put it: “After the Plane Gets You to the Airport, an App Comes in Handy”), mobile communications devices are increasingly called on for navigation purposes — to supplement, as it were, the human body in flight.

During a recent radio interview about airports on the program “To the Best of Our Knowledge,” I quipped that Facebook could potentially outpace airports as the ultimate hubs for people’s connections such that humans might stop flying altogether.

Throughout my research and writing about airports I have often wondered about the aura of exception that air travel evokes. I am continually puzzled

by how, in an age of so many other technological advances over the past 20 years, airports have managed to retain their status as extraordinary places that demand a strange sort of seriousness and near piety. In a world where social networking can facilitate revolutions and where connections happen as easily online as off, it seems inevitable that moving hundreds of bodies around in large vessels will go out of fashion.

It isn't as though I truly believe that Facebook will become the 21st century transit zone. It's more that distinct aspects of airports — including high demand for entertainment, feelings of dead time, anxieties about contingencies — have anticipated and helped to pave the way for a host of newer experiences that are more about on-demand mediation and information (and capital) flows, and less about human bodies actually *going places*.

The human body is always in the picture, of course. There's always an experienced plane, a phenomenal range — whether it's a craggy mountain or a keyboard, a river eddy or an earbud. Human air travel will most likely be around for some time yet. But drones — particularly the nanodrones of the next generation — suggest that there is a critical convergence on the horizon, where remote sensing and screen culture might displace today's commonplace demand for airbuses.

Ubiquitous droning calls attention to myriad landscapes of flight. It is sitting in front of a computer monitoring remote locations. It is distinguishing between birds and bots. It is a chorizo taco on its way, tracked on a screen in your palm. It is a speeding ticket that records you going too fast when (you thought) no one else was around. And it is also the bulky plane we still line up to get on, if only as a negative assessment rubric. As Major Michael L. Anderson, a doctoral student at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base's advanced navigation technology center, noted about the next generation of drones: "It's impressive what they can do ... compared to what our clumsy aircraft can do."

I do not know the future of drones. I'm not sure how they will transform commercial air travel, how they will affect that everyday experience that we can't yet quite imagine will be any different from how it currently exists. But I suspect that drones will continue to borrow from — perhaps eventually replace — the sensations and expectations that are uniquely found during air travel.

Another DeLillo passage, this one from *Underworld*, is suggestive of this line of inquiry:

There was a noise that started, a worldly hum—you began to hear it when you left your carpeted house and rode out to the airport. He wanted something friendly to read in the single sustained drone that marks every mile in a business traveler's day.

This passage is about a character's choice of airport reading, yet the "single sustained drone" is an uncanny instance of prescience. It portends the proliferation of these so-named devices that promise both constant war and its obverse side: the banality of military-grade existence.

The historical, mutually constitutive conjunctions of military and civilian aviation have been well documented and accounted for. What we need next are subtle analyses of how the most quotidian new media practices and ordinary travel experiences are co-shaping one another, and perhaps mutating at scales that go far beyond the human in both directions.

Looking out a window seat at 37,000 feet; zooming way out with Google Earth; seeing the world through the camera eye of a Hummingbird drone — these sorts of experiences decenter the human being, even as they imply human control. They communicate that humans are merely one species migrating around merely one planet in a vast universe. And they are also about the levels "below": the informational, computational, entomological, bacteriological, elemental. These are other versions of the "worldly hum," to use DeLillo's phrase, that air travel brings into the foreground — a resonance being made all the more acute by the presence of ubiquitous droning. ■

See for instance David Pascoe, Aircraft, London, Reaktion, 2004; and Peter Adey, Aerial Life: Spaces, Mobilities, Affects, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010



Search for a Method

by

CHASE MADAR

*Hard numbers meet soft power when it comes to
tallying Pakistani drone-strike deaths*

WE TEND NOT to bother ourselves much with the foreign civilians our government has killed. We get far more misty-eyed over the treatment of our war criminals, from Lieutenant William Calley (defended ardently not just by Loretta Lynn but by the New Jersey State Legislature and an up-and-coming Georgia governor named Jimmy Carter) to Sergeant Bob Bales, whose unhappy backstory received loads of sympathetic media attention after he killed 16 unarmed Afghan civilians. But battlefield reporters who give serious attention to civilian casualties from

American military strikes, they get called all sorts of nasty names, not only by right-wing jingoists but by Obama-loving liberals as well.

Since 2009 we have been making war in, if not exactly on, Pakistan, with the predictable result of civilian casualties. Though the prospect of widening the Afghan War into Pakistan was condemned four years ago as “Strangelovian” by Mitt Romney and John McCain, our Peace Prize president has rushed where neocon ultras once feared to stomp. The weapon of choice is the drone, though we shouldn’t get too hung up on the hardware: the story wouldn’t be too different if we were launching cruise missiles from warships or dropping bombs from aircraft. The debate over noncombatant citizens of Pakistan killed by our drone strikes has almost been drowned out by the minor issue of who has leaked what about the risibly “secret” program.

Almost — but not entirely.

How many Pakistani civilians has our government killed? Who wants to know? For Washington, the drone strikes in Pakistan are ostensibly “secret” and officials can acknowledge them only through leaks and winks, so any official and transparent tally is not forthcoming.

The Pakistani state, meanwhile, has its own agenda. In a series of analyses published in Al Jazeera that

have not gotten the attention they deserve in the U.S., Muhammad Idrees Ahmad, a lecturer in journalism at Montfort University in the U.K., has explained the incentives of the Pakistani military and intelligence to minimize civilian casualties in their reports to the press. It's bad enough to admit that a foreign country is firing missiles into your territory with your tacit permission, but to cop to a high rate of civilian casualties would be national dishonor.

On top of that, any Pakistani journalist who investigates the scenes of the strikes firsthand and tabulates the civilians killed faces a daunting methodological challenge: a high likelihood of violent death. The Pakistani state does not allow journalists into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) where all the drone attacks take place, but occasionally, reporters manage their way past the checkpoints.

In November 2005, freelance journalist Hayatullah Khan went to the village of Haisori in North Waziristan near the Afghan border to verify a Predator strike, whose Hellfire missiles had struck a compound killing Taliban leader Abu Hamza Rabia along with a Syrian bodyguard and Mohammad Aziz and Abdul Waseed, the 7-year-old son and 17-year-old nephew of the homeowner, Sadiq. Khan filed story with the Urdu-language daily *Ausaf*, including the photos he had taken of the physical evidence: scraps of ordnance with the words "AGM-

144,” “guided missile” and “U.S.” The story and the photos were widely and globally circulated.

I am grateful to Dr. Micah Zenko of the Council on Foreign Relations for highlighting this incident in a post on his excellent blog, Politics, Power, and Preventive Action.

The next day, Khan’s car was run off the road and he was hauled away by armed men. His corpse was found six months later, still handcuffed, a bullet wound in the back of his head.

When journalists do make it out of the FATA alive, their work is barely acknowledged in the U.S. Noor Behram is a freelance journalist and photographer who has visited 60 sites of drone strikes and taken photographs of the wreckage and the carnage. Behram estimates that only one in ten to one in 15 of those killed is a bona fide Taliban or al-Qaeda member. American intellectuals have expressed little interest in Behram’s work, except to dismiss it.

Instead, the raw data for the most commonly cited civilian casualty estimates comes direct from members of the Pakistani military and intelligence services who informally give casualty estimates, sometimes broken down between “militants” and civilians, sometimes not, to the wire services and major newspapers, who duly report them.

In the U.S., major newspapers don’t tabulate the civilian casualties — they leave this task to the think tanks. The Foundation for the Defense of Democracy and the Jamestown Foundation, both hard-right, neoconservative Beltway think tanks,

have their studies purporting low civilian casualty rates: 6.14 percent and 4.95 percent, respectively. (Bill Roggio, head of the FDD study, candidly admits that his data is hardly reliable and that the civilian casualty rate “could be 20 percent ... they could be 5 percent.”)

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, headquartered in London, away from Washington’s gravitational pull, employs an entirely different range of techniques than either the Long War Journal or the Jamestown Institute’s studies. Using a network of researchers and journalists on the ground in the FATA to investigate each media report, the BIJ constantly updates their own figures and have managed to carry out two field investigations, all of which leads them to a civilian casualty rate between 13.5 percent and 33.6 percent. Chris Brown, director of the BIJ study, is somewhat impatient with the mystification regarding civilian casualties in the FATA. As he emailed me recently, “It’s often put about, usually by those seeking to undermine reporting from Waziristan, that it’s ‘impossible’ to get accurate information from there. That is not the case. It is possible to get pretty accurate information from FATA: You just need to be able to invest time and resources, and accept that the most accurate information may not come in during the regular news cycle.”

And yet the BIJ study, despite far more rigorous methodology, is not often cited in U.S. mainstream media accounts. The *New York Times*' Scott Shane actually quotes "unnamed officials" who accuse the Bureau of Investigative Journalism of being one of the "elements who would like nothing more than to malign these efforts and help al-Qaeda succeed."

Instead, the most commonly referenced study comes from the New America Foundation, a nonprofit that is not too frothily right-wing, but certainly not anti-war. One of the NAF study's two directors, Peter Bergen, is a hardcore supporter of the Afghan war, which he likes to note "only" costs 1 percent of American annual GDP. The NAF count puts the civilian casualty rate at 16.94 percent, with most of those fatalities from the Bush-Cheney years. For the year 2012 to date, the NAF reckons that not a single Pakistani civilian has been killed by a drone, only "militants."

But what makes someone a "militant" in a region where the majority of the men believe in Sharia law and tote firearms as a matter of daily life? It is the very nature of guerrilla warfare that the line between insurgents and civilians is shifting and blurry, as Pakistan expert Anatol Lieven at Kings College-London has pointed out in an interview with the BIJ. Lieven is surprised that the BIJ's civilian casualty rate isn't even higher.

For its part, the Obama administration, according to the *New York Times*, defines “militant” with meaningless circularity as any male of military age who is killed in a strike. And the “signature strikes” against unnamed, unknown individuals whose “patterns of behavior” — carrying a gun, for instance — mark them as legitimate targets.

This is how the civilian casualty rates are produced — but how are they consumed? In the media reception of all the various civilian casualty estimates, there are two broad trends. First, American intellectuals are generally eager to dismiss on-the-ground Pakistani sources as hopelessly biased. C. Christine Fair, an assistant professor of Security Studies and an oft-cited authority on Pakistan, has expressed withering skepticism of all nonofficial body counts that pop up in Pakistan’s non-English language press.

She is certainly right to take any unverified estimate with a grain of salt. But Fair goes further. There is no way of verifying Behram’s photographs, she says, and the women who are killed aren’t necessary civilians, as they could be suicide bombers. The death tolls are exaggerated, says Fair, either planted by the anti-American intelligence services or by locals with their own reasons to inflate.

But Fair’s probing skepticism, like that of other defense intellectuals, coexists alongside an untroubled

faith in high officialdom, whose word she takes at face value:

U.S. officials interviewed as well as Pakistani military and civilian officials have confirmed to this author that drones kill very few ‘innocent civilians.’ I had been a drone opponent until 2008. I now believe that they are best option.

In other words, she has it on good authority — good, unnamed, official authority — and we should simply trust these unnamed officials, just as she does.

Fair also emphasizes how the drone strikes in Pakistan are rigorously *legal*, the intended inference being that lawfulness and wanton slaughter are by nature antithetical. History tells us they are not. Overall, the laws of armed conflict license much more lethal violence than they proscribe, and they turn out to be very supple instruments in the hands of a great power.

For example, the massacre of over a dozen Iraqi civilians by a U.S. Apache gunship, captured in Wikileaks’ viral video “Collateral Murder,” is according to many jurists not a “war crime” at all but a perfectly legal (though of course, regrettable) instance of regular, noncriminal war. Neither Amnesty International nor Human Rights Watch nor Human Rights First uttered any condemnation of that event because the applicable laws of armed conflict here are, at best, muddy.

It always bears mentioning that the laws of armed conflict were not written by an angel choir but by the attorneys of great powers; the main function of these laws is to license lethal violence and to protect the privileges of armed combatants.

There is an equally strong tendency among American intellectuals to embrace low civilian casualty counts, no matter how dodgy the study's methodology or provenance. Two years ago, Brian Glyn Williams, a historian at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, gave a sneak peak of his own study to Spencer Ackerman, then of FireDogLake, a left-libertarian website, and the *Washington Independent*. Ackerman rather breathlessly reported that the study had been "peer reviewed." But this was not true in the commonly accepted sense of the term: peer review is a process by which articles submitted to academic journals are screened, more or less rigorously. The Williams study had not come out in any scholarly journal, nor did it ever, instead it was published in the newsletter of the ultra-conservative Jamestown Foundation. No matter, from its debut in Ackerman's blog post, the Williams study was touted in the Daily Kos, the Moderate Voice and elsewhere in the mod-prog blogosphere.

A few military intellectuals have railed against drones, not out of humanitarian concern but for strategic reasons. It is unclear whether their strategic goal is national security or career advancement. Andrew Exum and David Kilcullen of the Center for New American Security have editorialized against drone attacks, pointing out the aerial death robots' tendency to alienate the hearts and minds that their own pet theory, counterinsurgency, aspires to win. Exum has elsewhere made emphatically clear that, lest he be

considered an effete softy, he does not care how many civilians the drone strikes kill:

I do not care how many civilians drone strikes *actually* kill. And I do not care how many civilians *Americans* think drone strikes in Pakistan kill. I care only about how many civilians Pakistanis think drone strikes kill.

All the same, it is no corruption of humanitarian concerns to note that civilian casualties also are a matter of strategic importance, with a heavy price to our own security. To what degree does the killing of civilians motivate revenge attacks against American targets, abroad or at home? Are the strikes creating more potential terrorists?

This question has been resolutely ignored, particularly by those who should know better. The would-be bomber of Times Square in May 2010, Faisal Shahzad, told the judge at his arraignment that he had intended to avenge all those killed by American military violence throughout the Muslim world: “When the drones hit, they don’t see the children,” he told the judge.

But the thriving niche industry of terrorist “radicalization” studies has been hell-bent on ignoring this point-blank declaration of motive. The report “Rethinking Radicalization” by the liberal advocacy group the Brennan Center makes no reference to America’s enormous military boot print in the Muslim world as a force that might inspire anti-American violence.

The Brennan Center would likely argue that dead Pakistani civilians are outside their sphere of U.S. domestic expertise, and that the topic is politically “controversial” and therefore not worth a mention in their glossy report. And yet Liza Goitein, director of the Center’s Program on Liberty and Security felt fully licensed to rail against Private Manning for the purely speculative casualties she says might have resulted from the alleged leaks. At least no one can say American intellectuals lack the courage to condemn imaginary deaths.

The best, then, that American reformers can do is to urge greater transparency, perhaps by transferring control of the drone strikes in Pakistan from the CIA to the military. This would by no means be a bad thing, but it is almost beside the point. Transparency of the rules governing the strikes does not answer the large question of how the intervention in Pakistan’s low-boil civil war is supposed to further U.S. security, the spread democracy, human rights, or any other goal. And even if we could get instant, perfectly accurate accounts of civilian casualties inside Pakistan, there is very little appetite for such knowledge here; the few of us who do care are too politically feeble to do anything about it. Counterterrorism czar John Brennan needn’t have taken the embarrassing trouble last June of claiming, ridiculously, that the drone strikes had killed zero civilians, at least not for our sake. ■



Louder Than Bombs

by

MADIHA R. TAHIR

*Obama's drone-strike campaign in Pakistan weds
the torture of greivous injury to the tortured rhetoric
of justification*

What is the dream?

I dream that my legs have been cut off, that my eye is missing, that I can't do anything... Sometimes, I dream that the drone is going to attack, and I'm scared. I'm really scared.

After the interview is over, Sadaullah Wazir pulls the pant legs over the stubs of his knees till they conceal the bone-colored prostheses.

The articles published in the days following the attack on September 7, 2009, do not mention,

this poker-faced, slim teenage boy who was, at the time of those stories, lying in a sparse hospital in North Waziristan, his legs smashed to a pulp by falling debris, an eye torn out by shrapnel. Nor is there a single word about the three other members of his family killed: his wheelchair-bound uncle, Mautullah Jan and his cousins Sabr-ud-Din Jan and Kadaanullah Jan. All of them were scripted out of their own story till they tumbled off the edge of the page.

Did you hear it coming?

No.

What happened?

I fainted. I was knocked out.

As Sadaullah, unconscious, was shifted to a more serviceable hospital in Peshawar where his shattered legs would be amputated, the media announced that, in all likelihood, a senior al-Qaeda commander, Ilyas Kashmiri, had been killed in the attack. The claim would turn out to be spurious, the first of three times when Kashmiri would be reported killed.

Sadaullah and his relatives, meanwhile, were buried under a debris of words: “militant,” “lawless,” “counterterrorism,” “compound,” (a frigid term for a home). *Move along*, the American media told its audience, *nothing to see here*. Some 15 days later,

after the world had forgotten, Sadaullah awoke to a nightmare.

Do you recall the first time you realized your legs were not there?

I was in bed, and I was wrapped in bandages. I tried to move them, but I couldn't, so I asked, "Did you cut off my legs?" They said no, but I kind of knew.

Three years after the attack on Sadaullah and his family during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and eight years after the drone attacks began killing people in Pakistan, the *New York Times* has finally confirmed details about the vetting process for kill lists, about crowd kills, and the way death by drone transforms any Muslim body into a "militant."

Survivors and families of the dead have been saying exactly this for quite some time. The truth is carved out on their bodies, but it has taken a smattering of quotes from anonymous administrative officials to turn it into an important story. After all, who can believe *those* people — not the anonymous unaccountable ones, but the ones with the missing limbs and dead relatives, those illiterates, savages, liars, terrorists and neighbors of terrorists, and terror spawn — who can believe them?

Why do you think they attacked you?

They say there were terrorists, but it was my home... There are no terrorists. It's just common people with beards.

Yes, it is useful for the Obama administration to admit, even anonymously, that it has defined away the problem of killing civilians by classifying a “militant” as someone who is killed by an American drone. But my point is a different one: It is about the open secret, the information that is now public knowledge but technically classified by the government. It's about the way the American government's hammy, theatrical performance of this faux secrecy frames the questions worth asking and determines the information worth printing.

Consider, for example, *New York Times* journalist Scott Shane's response to accusations by Harvard's media monitoring website, Nieman Watchdog, that the paper of record was enabling a “smear campaign” against those exposing the drone wars by citing accusations from anonymous officials. Here is Shane explaining how the theatre of public secrets works:

The drone program, as I have written, is in the strange category of classified but public information, which creates difficulties both for government officials and for journalists. Many outsiders and some government officials think the situation is untenable and that the program should be made overt, so that real debates could take place on Congress [sic] and the public on these issues.

In the meantime, journalists often have a choice of quoting anonymous officials or writing stories about accusations of bad strikes and innocent

deaths and including no response at all. I feel it's important to include some voice from the other side, and my editors have agreed. In addition, it seems to me important to citizens to know what the government says, even if some citizens find the statements unpersuasive or worse."

Shane alludes to what has become a well-worn practice in the American media: the reduction of all issues and politics to an abysmally farcical battle of quotes, to one side and "the other side" — as if the American state were simply the bureaucratic equivalent of a teen amputee living in a war zone. And it gets even more convoluted. Because the state is also ostensibly a democratic and accountable one, it becomes even more necessary, as Shane says, for "citizens to know what the government says."

But with the state representing both the position of one voice among many *and also* the American expression of democracy writ large, the government's view is presented two ways: On the one hand, it's an essential view — citizens have a right to know. On the other hand, this view often goes to print unverified, since it is one voice among competing others in a point-counterpoint model of journalism wherein differing parties offer their versions of the truth for the reader to decide. In other words, it is the government's talk or lack thereof that constitutes all the news that's fit to print.

So, nearly a decade after the drone strikes, what makes the news *news* is not the endangered lives of America's *others*, but the government's theater of secrets which keeps journalists busy hunting, cajoling, and dealmaking for leaks and official quotes to confirm what we already know. For the mainstream American press, "real debates," as Shane honestly says, only happen after the government makes the information public. Till then, the government says *move along*, and the press largely obliges. This is how the domain of the real becomes government property. All else is just a dream. Or, a nightmare.

Where it concerns Pakistan, mainstream American media hardly ever seems to get around to the actual men, women, and plenty of children ripped apart by drones. Sadaullah and others like him are waiting to be heard in the mainstream U.S. press. They've volunteered time and again to speak to reporters. Photo and videos of them exist. The lawyer for some of these survivors and families of victims has offered interviews, and yet each time, the mainstream press refuses. No space. No time. Not right for us. The staff is too busy to verify.

It is not that leaks or stories about them are worthless or unimportant; they are not. Indeed, the treat-

ment of Private Manning proves how enormously important leaks are. But the public performance of secrecy by the government conditions the discussion so much that it has diminished the ability to consider seriously the lives of others.

When the government claims that the definition of a “militant” is a secret, or that the drone attack program in Pakistan’s tribal areas is classified, segments of the anti-war movement and human rights organizations respond by demanding transparency and accountability. The hope is that transparency will open the program to questioning and meaningful review. What transparency and accountability often mean concretely in the context of drone attacks on Pakistanis is evident in a press release by Human Rights Watch issued this April. The release exposes how smartly the government’s public secrets’ theatre shifts the terms of the problem:

Remarks by a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official suggesting the agency is not legally bound by the laws of war underscore the urgent need for the Obama administration to transfer command of all aerial drone strikes to the armed forces ... The CIA is playing an increasing role in drone attacks with no transparency or demonstrated accountability, Human Rights Watch said ... The U.S. government’s refusal to acknowledge the CIA’s international legal obligations or provide information on strikes where there have been credible allegations of laws-of-war violations leaves little basis for determining whether the U.S. is meeting its international legal obligations, Human Rights Watch said.

In other words, the government says the basis of its actions is secret. HRW responds by demanding that the government hand over control of the drone attacks from the CIA to the military. (The assumption that the military will be more transparent is rather dubious.) Once the problem — and consequently, the solution that flows from it — is framed in these terms, it is the government's secrecy on which the whole issue turns. The only question here is how many "civilians" versus "militants" are killed; that is, if we could just get the calculus right, there would be no further ethical or political questions. Such a position merely calls for the legalization of an illegal war. It is a sensibility of rules without a sense of principle. Rather than questioning from where we have come and where we are going, it simply asks that the trains run on time.

Even as we debate the legal machinations, official leaks and governmental manipulations by which they are killed, the daily, material, precarious existence of the people living under the disquieting hum of American drones in Pakistan's tribal areas rarely sits at the center of discussion.

But what if it did? If, instead of the public secret, one begins with a prosthetic limb, a glass eye, and a funeral photo, the nightmare takes form, solidifies.

There is Sadaullah before you or Karim Khan talking about the brother and son he lost, or S. Hussein

offering you the funeral snapshot of his months-old niece, you know that the difference between being killed by an administration that lies about how many civilians it has killed and one that has simply “changed the definition” is exactly zero. This is not information that affects the lives at hand. It doesn’t really matter if you’re killed by a lie or a definition.

When you ask Sadaullah or Karim or S. Hussein and others like them what they want, they do not say “transparency and accountability.” They say they want the killing to stop. They want to stop dying. They want to stop going to funerals — and being bombed even as they mourn. Transparency and accountability, for them, are abstract problems that have little to do with the concrete fact of regular, systematic death. The technologies to kill them move faster than the bureaucracies that would keep more of them alive: A Hellfire missile moves at a thousand miles per hour; transparency and accountability do not.

Offering the latter as a solution to the former is to demand that they endure the horrifying and survive the untenable until such time as when these tangled administrative procedures can adjudicate whether the practice is legal. It confuses legality with justice, the law with ethics. It is fine for the lawyers, but as general talk within the left, it is a very roundabout way of showing that you care.

At its core, the kind of journalism and the legalistic solutions I am discussing here are more about the government's kabuki secrecy than with the problem of imperiled, exposed lives in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia. Such solutions have very little to say about the problem of killing and dying in those places.

Meanwhile, the people in Pakistan's tribal areas do endure. Many will tell you that they take pills for psychological illnesses, and hearing that, it becomes impossible not to ask: on what grounds does it make sense to put these people under conditions of terror so that the U.S. can hunt for terrorists? This question is thousands of miles away from the constitutional intricacies of kill lists. While issues of law and governance have deep implications for American democracy, it is critical to separate the interests of American citizens from the interests of the victims of the American government. To do any less is to mistake self-absorption for empathy, to fail to recognize that the theatre of secrets masks the concrete nightmare Americans refuse to see.

At some point later, I asked Sadaullah half-jokingly, *Why should I believe you?* He pointed at his plastic limbs, his fake eye. *Look at me,* he said. ■

MIEMMI

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A DRONE BY ANY OTHER NAME

BY JACOB SILVERMAN



**A PUBLIC-RELATIONS MAKEOVER FOR PREDATOR DRONES?
IT'S ALL IN THE LINGO.**

	MEMORANDAM FOR THE RECORD
	<p>SUBJECT: UAV Naming & Branding Protocols</p> <p>FROM: [Author] & [Co-Author], MARKETING DEPARTMENT</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. [REDACTED], chief of R&D, reports that [COMPANY]'s development of new Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (hereafter "UAV") has proceeded according to initial timeline. Four (4) new UAVs expected to undergo initial flight and combat tests in Q4 2012.2. Head of JSOC materiel acquisitions has expressed interest in two (2) of [COMPANY]'s UAV prototypes for deployment in successor to Project Avocado. Recommend push on all four (4).3. Board has tasked R&D, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, CIVILIAN OUTREACH, and this DEPARTMENT to establish naming & branding protocols for new and future UAVs.<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. N.B. [Co-author] adamantly objects to usage of term "drone," which has unfortunately entered the nomenclature but does not accurately communicate the nature of this technology. [Co-author] stresses that [COMPANY] should combat poor press surrounding this term & make effort coterminous with shelved Project for Peacetime UAV Applications. [Co-author] recommends restarting Peacetime UAV program.2. [Author] has no opinion on said project but refers respondents to previous memorandum, "Cultivating a Credulous Media," produced by DEPARTMENT and MEDIA RELATIONS.

4. DEPARTMENT recommends examining extant UAV naming procedures, as well as "nicknames" created among local populations subject to UAV surveillance and/or lethal kinetic strikes.

1. Mexican drug runners employ euphemism "el mosco" – the mosquito – in relation to Border Patrol's Predator B UAVs. However, "zangana" is believed to be Spanish word for "drone"; memorandum authors await confirmation from LINGUISTICS team. (N.B. Not to be confused with Haifa Zangana, female Iraqi author who has spoken to Communist media against "drone" strikes; [Author] recommends further monitoring (see: Appendix C, "Dossier").)

2. Pashto-speaking peoples have adopted term "bangana" – wasp.

3. Detroit peoples reportedly christened police helicopters "ghetto birds."

1. Term may find new life with Detroit Police Department's plan to deploy drones to monitor city's Occupy protestors. (See: [Author] refers respondents to prior memorandum regarding police UAV junket.)

2. N.B. Memorandum [Co-author] adds that "ghetto bird" is common euphemism in urban communities; cites lyrics from rap musician Ice Cube (see: Appendix C, "Dossier").

4. Residents of Gaza Strip refer to Israeli UAVs as "zenana, zenana" (unknown if repetition is customary or panic-induced). Term has rough meaning of "buzz," but in Egyptian Arabic is "slang used to describe a relentlessly nagging wife," according to press source.

5. DEPARTMENT has attached list (see: Appendix A, "List of Known UAV Systems Worldwide") of UAV names for approximately

50 other nations known to maintain UAV programs. Notables analyzed below.

1. China has shown preference for prehistoric birds (Pterodactyl, Pterosaur), eagles (Combat Eagle UCAV, Guizhou Solar Eagle HALE UAV, Long Haul Eagle), jellyfish. LINGUISTICS team currently tasked with deciphering Sheyang Darksword UAV, Xianglong, Yilong, Changkong-1, Changkong-2. Use of American symbol "eagle" is troubling and should be taken up with State Department liaison; may hinder [COMPANY] in export market.
2. Israel maintains simple monikers for several dozen UAV models: Mastiff, Silver Arrow, Scout, Searcher, Ranger, Heron, Eitan, Skylark, Hermes, Sparrow, Butterfly. Model names may change upon export, as Israel remains No. One (1) exporter of UAV products.

1.[Author] notes that, as [COMPANY] has learned, Israeli example may be copied and improved upon. Consequently [Author] recommends that LINGUISTICS perform second semiotic analysis of Hebrew State's UAV names and branding procedures.

3. Iranians claim Ghods Mohajer 1, Ghods Mohajer 2, Ghods Mohajer 3, Ghods Mohajer 4 UAVs; all part of Mersad series. Name translates to "migrant." Mersad UAVs also operated by Iranian terrorist client Hezbollah. Other Iranian drones: Ababil ("Swallow") and Saeghe ("Thunderbolt"). Caution is warranted, as Persian state is known to fabricate military technologies, make extensive use of dummies, pro-state propaganda outlets, and Photoshop™ image manipulation.

1.N.B. [Co-author] wishes to add to the record – as is his right according to his rank – that Iranians should not be underestimated, particularly in light of captured American RQ-170 Sentinel UAV (see: "December Incident Memorandum"). [Author] disagrees with [Co-author]'s assessment and has urged him to re-examine the relevant casework.

6. DEPARTMENT has continued to be impressed by naming protocols adopted by some competitors, in regards to UAVs and associated technologies. Ex: Predator, Reaper, Gorgon Stare, ScanEagle, Neptune, MQ-1C Grey Eagle, Switchblade, Global Hawk, Global Observer, SkySeer, Phantom Eye.
1. Use of mythological and strong, imposing animal symbology continues to inspire fear in enemies and embolden United States of America and her military allies.
 2. N.B. [Co-author] began weeping after [Author] added this line to the record. Reason unknown; will proceed.
7. U.S. government (hereafter "USG") and military personnel continues to use "bugsplat" as official referent for civilians killed in kinetic strikes.
1. [Author] notes that "bugsplat" referent remains classified; urges renewed USG investigation regarding how referent leaked to media.
 - 1.N.B. [Co-author], having recovered himself, adds formal objection to this suggestion. Noted.
 2. Robinson, Jennifer, "human rights" lawyer writing in Al Jazeera, compared this term to Nazi description of Jews as harmful pests and Hutus describing Tutsis as "cockroaches" amidst Rwandan tragedy (N.B. PR department has not cleared use of term "genocide" in company communiques).
 - 1.[Author] recommends monitoring of Robinson, Jennifer.

8. "Squirters" remains de facto descriptor for targets running for cover.
1. [COMPANY] has no official position on this matter.



Learning the meaning and quality of

$$HCO_3^- + H_2O \rightleftharpoons H_2CO_3^* + OH^-$$




9. [Co-author] has obtained PowerPoint presentation authored by Woods, Chris, activist "journalist" from radical leftist organization Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ). ([Co-author] insists on adding select intelligence from presentation to memorandum. [Author] fails to see relevance – he supposes it may be of interest to GOVERNMENT RELATIONS – but is too beleaguered to object.)
1. Woods, Chris claims that, as of 2012 April, 2,429-3,097 have died in kinetic strikes in Pakistan; 479-811 are civilians.
 2. Per Woods, Chris: 170 named militants killed in strikes; 317 named civilians.



10. Memorandum [Co-author] has produced from aforementioned presentation list of names of alleged dead civilians in Pakistan tribal regions. [Author] referred [Co-author] to statement of June 2011 by White House Counterterrorism Adviser Brennan, John, who said that for one (1) year no civilian casualties had been recorded. [Co-author] remained insistent and could not be reasoned with; consequently [Author] has chosen to include following conversation:
[Co-author]: "These people must be named. It's important to know who they are and what we're doing."

[Author]: "There have been no civilian casualties."

[Co-author]: "Of course that's not true. These are people who died. At least call them collateral damage."

[Author]: "I disagree. You should trust the algorithms that have been developed. They are are of the highest order."

[Co-author]: "These were human beings."

[Author]: "It is a binary: target or non-target. It works perfectly. The teams are well-trained to execute it."

Following four (4) minutes of similar conversation, [Co-author] became hysterical, pleading, etc. Following one (1) half-hour, [Author] acceded to [Co-author], whose weeping had attracted attention of SECURITY & MEDICAL (see: attached report, "Mental Fitness Eval. of Employee [Co-author]"). [Co-author] received sedative, pacified, allotted two personal days. (N.B. Personal days contingent upon concurrence of HUMAN RESOURCES.)

11.	Given that [Co-author] remains, as of present moment, assigned to DEPARTMENT and co-tasked with this Memorandum, [Author] reluctantly submits Memorandum in current form. [Author]'s objections have been itemized in Appendix D.
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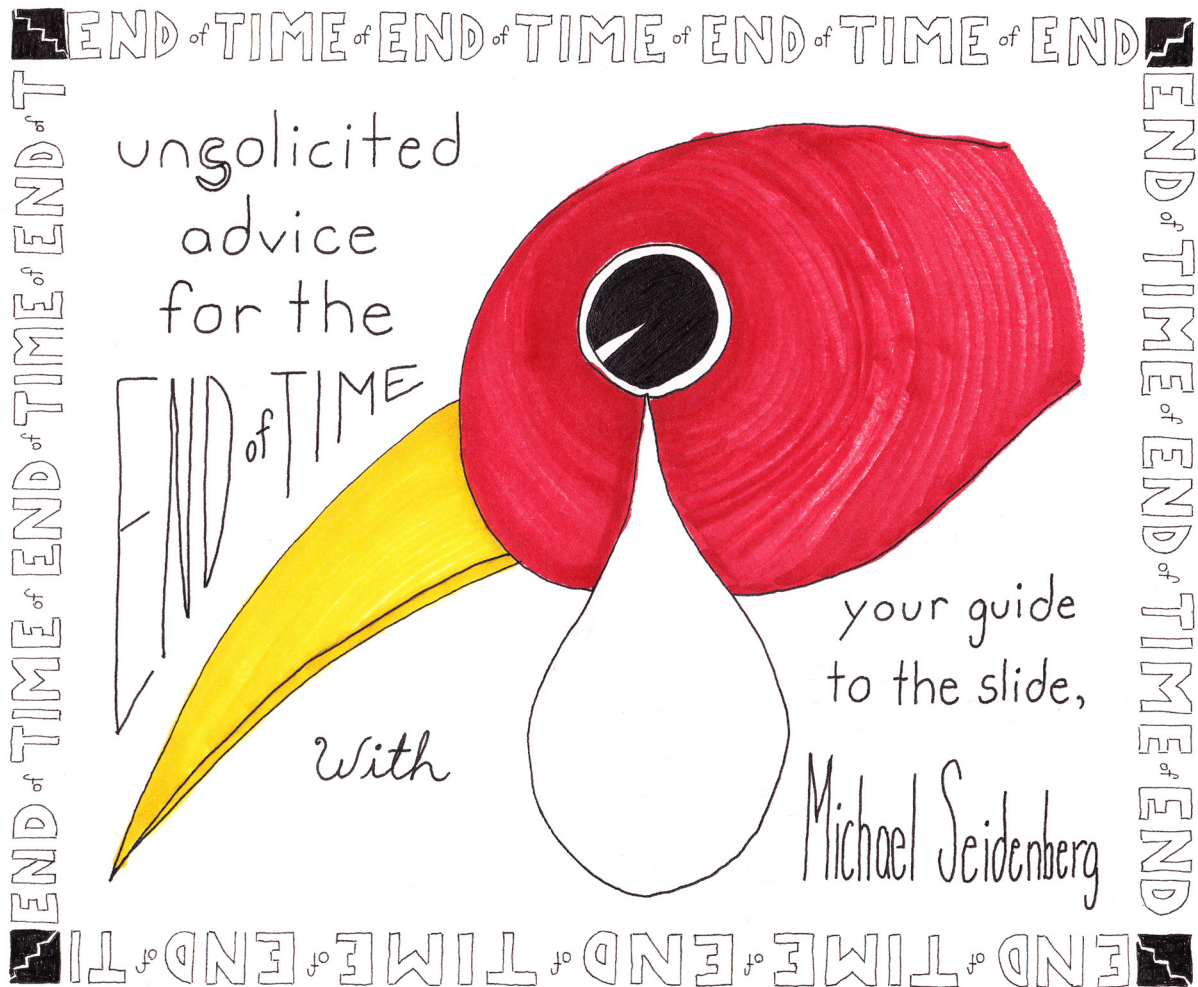
12.	In matter of [Co-author], [Author] recommends [COMPANY] increase extant monitoring.
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Sons of Sher Zaman Ashrafkhel (10, 16)	Fatima (child)	Abdul Ghafoor
Wife, daughter and two female child relatives of Abu Hamza Rabia	Nisar (child)	Jan Mohammad Mehsud
Noor Aziz (8)	Naeem Khan (child)	Dilawar
Abdul Wasit (17)	Two wives of Shams Ullah	Bakhan
Hayatullah KhaMohammad Tahir (16)	Saed Kamal	Noorullah Jan
Maulvi Khaleefa	Amanullah	Ilyas
Azizul Wahab (15)	Sahib Rehman	Jamil
Fazal Wahab (16)	Sakhi Rehman	Farman
Ziauddin (16)	Sohrab Khan	Imran
Mohammad Yunus (16)	2 sons, brother & 3 nephews (one 10) of Shera Deen	Latif
Fazal Hakim (19)	Bismullah, wife & 2 children	Wife & son of Badr Mansoor
Ilyas (13)	Din Mohammad's son, nephew & 2 daughters	Sardar
Sohail (07)	Yahya	Najid
Asadullah (09)	Samin	8 grandchildren, two wives and elder sister of Jalaluddin Haqqani
Shoaib (08)	Niamatullah	Kamran
Khalilullah (09)	Shahzad	Siddiq
Noor Mohammad (08)	Ilyas	Noorul Haq
Khalid (12)	Bashir	Zarmali Khan
Saifullah (09)	Wajid	Muhammad

Razi Mohammad (16)	Laiq	Sultan Jan
Mashooq Jan (15)	Naeem Ullah (10)	Bukhtoor Gul
Nawab (17)	Sabir	Aman Ullah Jan
Sultanat Khan (16)	Riaz	Imran Khan
Ziaur Rahman (13)	Shaukatullah	Elda Jan
Noor Mohammad (15)	Hans	Shakum
Mohammad Yaas Khan (16)	Taj	Nasrullah
Qari Alamzeb (14)	Sanaullah Jan (17)	Umar
Ghulam Nabi (21)	Raza Khan	Naeem
Ziaur Rahman (17)	Jamil	Dil Nawaz
Abdullah (18)	Mustafaa	Yousaf
Ikramullah (17)	Noor Gul	Ashraf
Inayatur Rahman (16) and Shahbuddin brothers (15)	Jaffar	Naimatullah
Yahya Khan (16)	Faraz	Taj Mohammad
Rahatullah (17)	Musa	Musa
Khan (21)	Kamal*	Mohammad Khaleel
Mohammad Salim (11)	Malik Daud Khan	Azaz-ur-Rehman
Shahjehan (15)	Ismail Khan	Mansoor-ur-Rehman
Gul Sher Khan (15)	Hajji Babat	Kushdil Khan
Bakht Muneer (14)	Khay Khan	Ubaid Ullah
Numair (14)	Gul Mohammed and his son	Ratiq Ullah
Mashooq Khan (16)	Ismael	Safat Ullah
Ihsanullah (16)	Gul Akbar	Shams
Luqman (12)	Mohammad Sheen	Noor

Jannatullah (13)	Lewanai	Majid
Ismail (12)	Mir Zaman	Siraj
Taseel Khan (18)	Din Mohammad	Malik Gulistan Khan & 3 sons
Zaheeruddin (16)	Malik Tareen	Noor Syed (8)
Qari Ishaq (19)	Noor Ali	Masai
Jamshed Khan (14)	Zare Jan	Mehboob
Alam Nabi (11), brothers	Sadiq	Waris
Qari Abdul Karim (19)	Mustaqeem	Wasim
Rahmatullah (14)	Khangai	Ihsan
Abdus Samad (17)	Gulnaware	Javed
Siraj (16)	Faenda Khan	Tahir
Saeedullah (17)	Dindar Khan	Maulvi Nazir's wife; daughter-in-law; sons Abdullah and Abdul Latif; & nephew Mohammad Shoaib
Abdul Waris (16)	Umark Khan	Tariq Dawar Khan
Darvesh (13)	Wali Khan	Sabir
Ameer Said (15)	Sadar	Ikram
Shaukat (14)	Bakhtar	Mohib
Inayatullah Rahman (17)	Atif (12)	Zahid
Salman (16)	Samad	Mashal
Fazal Wahab (18)	Jamshed	Syed Noor
Rahman (13)	Daraz	Jehanzeb
Wali-ur-Rahman (17)	Iqbal	Liaqat
Iftikhar (17)	Noor Nawaz	Daraz
Inayatullah (15)	Yousaf	Sabil

Adnan (16)	Shahzada	Mulvi Ikramuddin
Najibullah (13)	Akram Shah	Wife of Mulvi Ikramuddin
Naeemullah (17)	Atiq ur Rehman	Wife of Baitullah Mehsud
Hizbullah (10)	Irshad Khan	Syed Wali Shah (7)
Kitab Gul (12)	Amar Khan	Mautullah Jan
VW Iayat Khan (11)	Shabbir	Sabir-ud-Din
Zabihullah (16)	Kalam	Kadanullah Jan
Shehzad Gul (11)	Waqas	Razm Khan
Shabir (15)	Bashir	Sakeenullah (15)
Qari Sharifullah (17)	Abdul Jalil	Shaliq
Shatiullah (16)	Maulana Iftiqar	Bashirullah
Nimatullah (14)	Saeedur Rahman	Amir Khan
Shakirullah (16)	Khastar Gul	Shairullah
Talha (08)	Mamrud Khan	Abidullah
Jamroz Khan	Noorzal Khan	Fazle Rabbi
Nephew & son of Awaz Khan	Tariq Aziz	Syed Noor
Zahidullah	Waheed Khan	Shakirullah
Ayesha (3)	Akbar Zaman	Banaras
Noor Janan	Mir Qalam	Fayyaz
Farhad	Saad Wali Khan	Zaenullah Khan (17)
Samad	Muhammad Fayyaz	Asif Iqbal
Salam	Majan	Khaliq Dad
Baseer	Sarwar	Sadiq Noor
Naila (10)	Zamir Gul's 3 sons & 2 daughters-in-law	Wajid Noor (9)
Gulzar	Matiullah	Khalid
Shamim	Kashif	Zaman
		Waqar



MY OLD FRIEND and spirit guide, Roy Lavitt, who has the thankless job of illustrating this advice column, asks for nothing and gets it. Now, as the end of times gets nearer, he has finally asked for something — a mere trifle really. He would like me to write a column with birds or water drops, as he is really good at drawing birds and water drops. Sorry, Roy. No time; no can do. Sure, I could say something like "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," or



“Water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink,” but I’m not going to. These two platitudes might do for some other advice columns, but I have other fish to fry. (Maybe he can draw a flying fish.)

One thing I don’t want this column to do is to make anyone nervous or edgy about the upcoming cessation of activity. In fact, the end of things as we know them could mean that we can enjoy life in an all new way, as we have never known it. It’s starting to sound interesting now, isn’t it? Well, the fun is just beginning.

I was at a reading last night that featured László Krasznahorkai, the Hungarian writer who is sort of a poster child for apocalyptic literature. When asked if he was worried about the impending doom at the door, he said no and that he hoped people were not fearful wondering about the end and when it would come, because we are in the end times. Don’t fear, it’s already here.

At least that’s what I think he said, because he spoke low — very, very low. This brings to mind a simple self-improvement that we can all achieve very

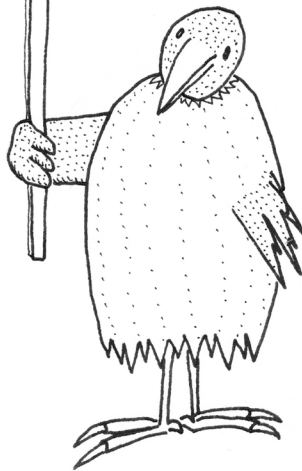


MEMO

From: The illustrator

To: The writer

the End of Time
is for the birds



and for
droplets
too





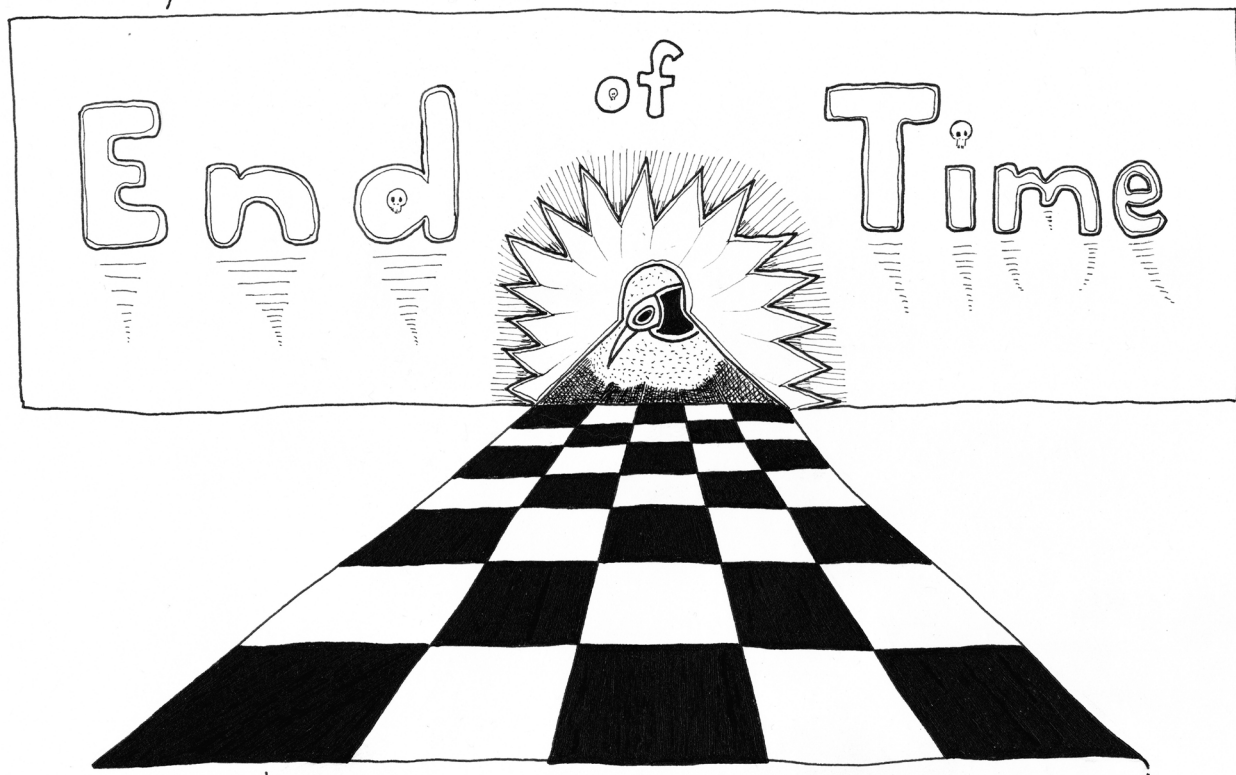
easily but would make life so much more focused as we travel through this final road trip: Speak up. Speak a bit louder and a bit clearer. In these timid times, too many people talk under their breath. It's a coward's way to communicate, and it has to stop. Don't worry, I'm not saying you can't talk through your hat. But if you must, do it with clarity. Clarity matters. Mumbling in general will be frowned upon. Whether it's due to a lack of spine or a weak lip, it will only cause problems, problems we do not have the time for. So speak your mind, just speak it distinctly.

Mumble though he might, Krasznahorkai has the right idea: Don't fear the end but engage with it. Unless he really said, "Don't rear-end the car in the garage with Ed." I'm going with my first hearing on this one. Make your end work for you; don't worry about the end of times but take care the times of your end and have the elegant exit you deserve. It's time to turn your to-do list into a to-don't list. Sometimes what not to do is just as important as what to do. If you had infinite time, you could read *Infinite Jest* every summer, but you don't. You need to need to know when to put a book down, not just when to pick one up. Be moved or move on. If you



have your desert-island-disc list, then start listening now, but remember: Change your list whenever you want. Do not get stuck. You're not going to see me lounging at the eternal seashore, water drops hitting me in the face, listening over and over again to Nelly Furtado sing, "I'm Like a Bird."

leave your checkered past behind you and come on down to the



a bad time will be had by all ®

PRAISE

FOR TNI : DRONES

"Can I marry one?"
—Wendi Deng Murdoch

"Well, I'm not interested in the potential military applications."
—UPenn engineering student and College Democrat

**"What we do know is that no order to fire was given.
It seems that the drone acted independently."**
—Barack Obama, emergency broadcast

"Once you go drone, you can never go home."
—Svedka spokescyborg Camille Paglia

"Tagg is a fine boy."
—Mitt Romney on the Program

"Now we live in the Age of Mechanical Sharks, a History without sleep."
—Francis Fukuyama

"It's like Vietnam but with robots."
—Gen. Stanely DarkChrystal, Outer Heaven, Indo-Afpakistan

**"I think you're overreacting.
It could be really easy to kill people with the consumer models, too."**
—Hassan Nasrallah

**"Like Fascism itself, the robots are self-steering
and yet utterly subjectless. Just like the former,
they combine the utmost technical perfection
with complete blindness. Just like the former,
they sow the deadliest panic and are completely futile.
— 'I have seen the world-spirit,' not on horseback but
on wings and headless, and this at once refutes
Hegel's philosophy of history."
—Theodor Adorno**

**"Now what are yer lookin' for, feller?
We got 'em small as a bee and as big as yer wife."
—Drone Dealer, McAllen, TX**